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A classic Cali car parked at Sunstone Winery in Santa Ynez Valley

PHOTOGRAPH: THE INGALLS

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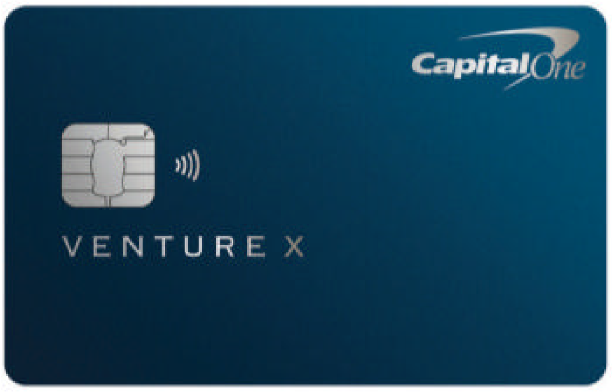

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Light streams through the windows of St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome

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PHOTOGRAPH: CHAD GREITER/UNSPLASH

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editor's letter

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS I celebrated a minor milestone birthday, one whose primary purpose was to signal, incontestably, the arrival of middle age. Rather than plan a boys trip or buy a Porsche (though both are highly appealing), I booked a night at the Carlyle, the legendary Upper East Side hotel now owned by Rosewood, for just me and my wife—no kids. The 24 hours passed like a dream: gazing from our suite at the stream of headlights emerging along Madison Avenue from the monumental shadows of Midtown; lingering over caviar and côte de boeuf at Dowling's; feeling like lords in robes high above foggy Central Park as we ate our room-service breakfast. At Bemelmans, amid the iconic murals and the butterscotch glow, we drank martinis at a table by the band. I told my wife how, on my birthday more than 20 years ago, a piano player at a hotel bar had performed "Bennie and the Jets" for me. Suddenly the band was playing it! She'd put in a discreet request. Unforgettable.

I want to go to Japan and Australia as much as everyone else right now, but my birthday was a reminder of something important the pandemic taught us: There is so much to discover in (and around) the places where we live. Several of this issue's stories make that point, like Rivka Galchen's family trip from her second hometown of Montreal through wintry rural Quebec (page 72) and David Amsden's pilgrimage from Los Angeles up to the vineyards and restaurants of the Santa Ynez Valley (page 64). Other pieces, including Michelle Jana Chan's train trip through central Vietnam (page 80) and Darrell Hartman's cruise of Greenland (page 29), attest to the virtues of seeing familiar destinations in fresh ways. I'm all for the thrill of the new, but (and this could be a sign of age) I also want to offer a humble endorsement for going deeper into places you already know—or think you do.

Something else unmissable in this issue is the Women Who Travel Power List (page 46), an inspiring compendium of woman leaders changing the way all of us travel. A lot is happening in the months ahead for Women Who Travel, our six-year-old platform for self-identifying women seeking to explore the world, including an expanded online Power List launching on March 8, International Women's Day, and new episodes of the terrific Women Who Travel podcast hosted by articles director Lale Arikoglu. No matter who you are, it's worth your time.

JESSE ASHLOCK
DEPUTY GLOBAL EDITORIAL DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF EDITORIAL CONTENT, U.S.
jesseashlock

ILLUSTRATION BY ANJE JAGER

ON THE COVER

Taking a dip at Bondi Icebergs Club in Sydney.
Photographed by Elise Hassey

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A handicrafts shop in Schnoor, the medieval old town of Bremen, Germany.
Photographed by Thomas Christians (@themodernleper)

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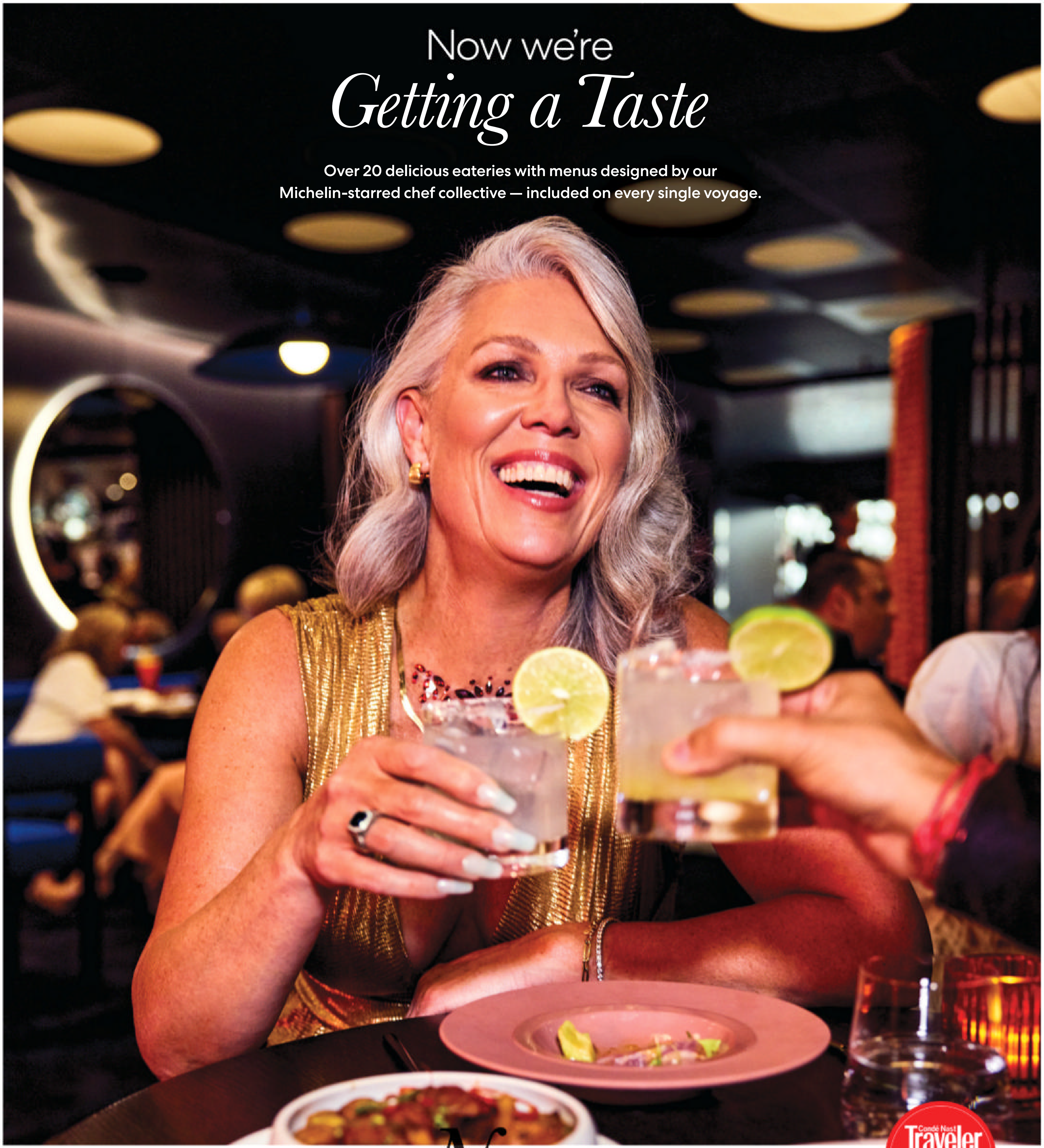
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WORD OF MOUTH

the people, places & ideas we're talking about right now

SECRET KYOTO

Few insiders know Japan's cultural capital like tour guide Sara Aiko, who shares her favorite places to eat, shop, and more

"You need to be part of the community to get the right access in Kyoto," says Sara Aiko, who moved from her native New Zealand to her mother's hometown 13 years ago to be closer to family. Frustrated by the predictable sites dominating tour itineraries, she launched Curated Kyoto in 2017 to share the city's hardest-to-find gems with visitors. "I look for places with a story to tell," she says. Here are a few of her personal favorites. →

PHOTOGRAPH: MITSURU WAKABAYASHI

Curated Kyoto founder Sara Aiko

WORD OF MOUTH » ask a local

A raked-gravel garden at Zuihō-in temple, in Kyoto's Kita Ward

Nanzenji Harada stands out for its simple approach to food

Fresh persimmon juice at Ki

» Nanzenji Harada "This beautiful restaurant in a renovated machiya town house near the Nanzen-ji Temple has just a single counter and seats one group a night for chef Harada's hyperminimal food, which focuses on simple dashi broth made with kelp and fresh-cut bonito flakes. He doesn't use any condiments or preservatives—no salt, sugar, or even soy—so the focus is on the intense flavors of simple mushrooms in broth or a wonderful oyakodon rice bowl with chicken and egg. It still feels like a precious secret, even to locals."

» Moksa "Central Kyoto has some great hotels, from the Ace and Roku to the new Shinmonzen, with its coolly contemporary design by Tadao Ando on an antiques street in Gion. But for something different, I'd head to the quieter north of the city, where it's all about temples and nature, to stay at Moksa. There's a charming sauna and hot baths surrounded by the forest, quietly gorgeous art, and great natural food paired with Japanese tea. It's an amazing place to switch off and revitalize."

» Ki "People always think it's strange that I recommend a Lebanese restaurant in Kyoto, but I love this place. It's a very local take on Lebanese food that's really fresh and interesting. There's a long table under a big skylight, and it feels like you're eating with other people at a big family dinner. There's been such a buzz about it since it opened in early 2021, with lines of locals queuing to get in."

» T.T "This is the gallery-like store of the young fashion designer Taiga Takahashi, who tragically passed away recently. It only opened in this Gion machiya at the end of 2021—a triumph in itself, as the Gion community tends to be very closed. But the brand has carried on, and the store is special, from the light-filled atelier downstairs, with a huge rock sculpture and views of a Zen garden outside, to the dark traditional sabi tea salon upstairs, where they hold serene tea ceremonies."

» Woven "Hidden away in the unheralded Okazaki neighborhood, this tiny coffee shop is one of my favorites in the city and another place you won't find in any guidebooks. It's run by Kan-chan, who used to work at the famous Kyoto Italian restaurant Monk. He serves the most amazing Japanese sweet treats with the coffee, like a yokan with tea leaves. Behind the lovely brick counter, he also has a serious record collection, and you'll often hear jazz or low-key hip-hop playing as you walk in."

» Zuihō-in "Kyoto has so many famous Zen temples, but I prefer the quieter ones, like Zuihō-in, part of the Daitoku-ji complex. It has a beautiful Zen garden—with stones, rocks, and sand—where I will often sit and read or write in my journal. I love just watching people come in and out of the temple, and sometimes the monk will come out and talk to me. It's my place to sit still, without distractions. There is a real sense of peace."

AS TOLD TO TOBY SKINNER

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, SARA AIKO COE, MITSUYUKI NAKAJIMA

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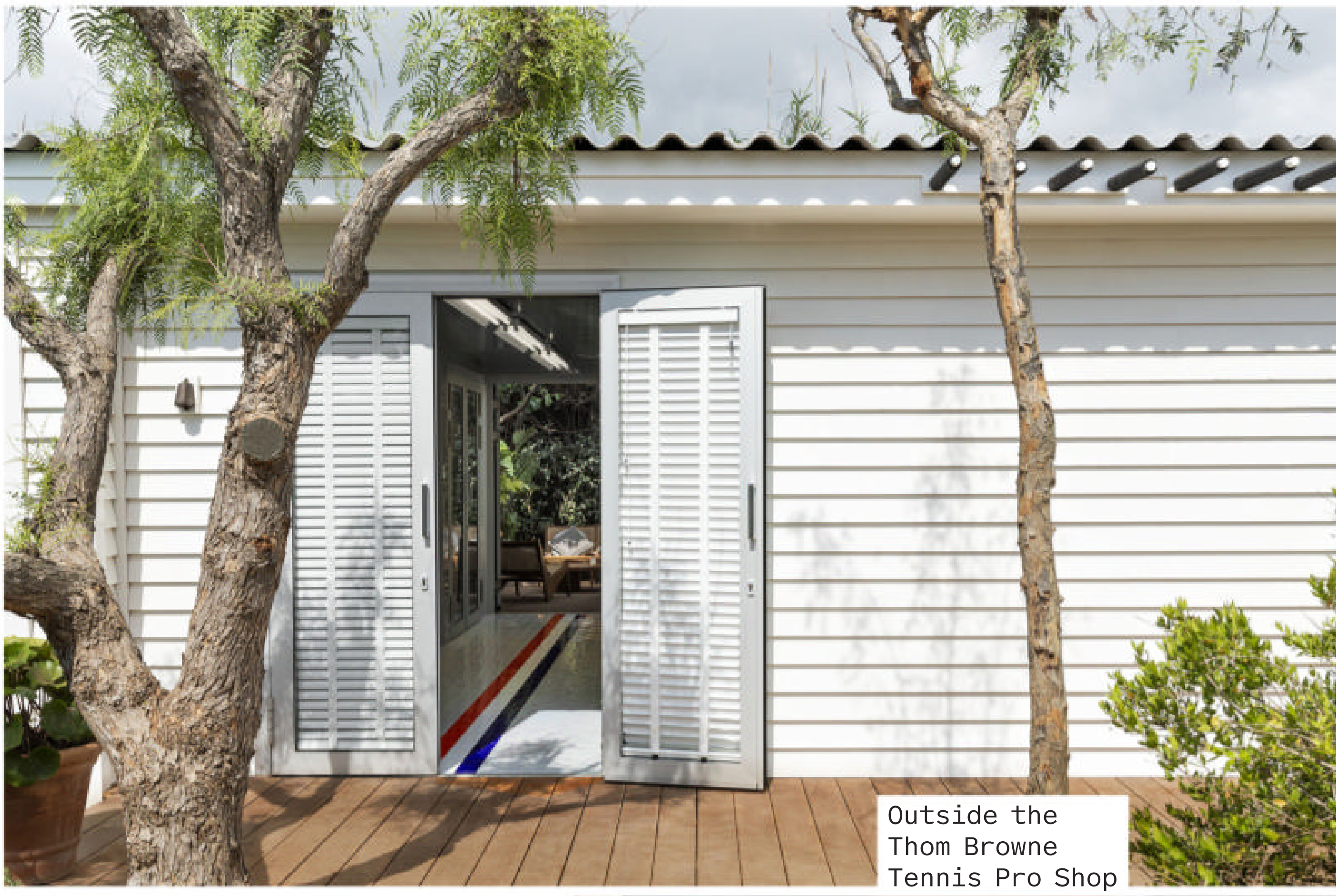
A PERFECT MATCH

The designer Thom Browne, who recently opened a tennis-inspired boutique near St.-Tropez, shares his off-court itinerary for the tony town

When you get invited to an exclusive club near St.-Tropez that counts John McEnroe as a member, the only answer is yes. In joining Épi Baie de Pampelonne, the iconoclastic couturier Thom Browne—a former tennis player himself—followed a long line of noteworthy figures, including Audrey Hepburn and Brigitte Bardot, to have patronized the Ramatuelle resort's glittering pools and red clay courts since its opening in 1959. Last June, Browne expressed his appreciation by debuting his first French boutique inside the recently refreshed property. A 500-square-foot jewel box clad in glossy subway tiles, the Thom Browne Tennis Pro Shop pays homage to both the sport and the locale it inhabits: There are swimsuits in striped pastels, pleated cotton-twill Bermuda shorts, and Browne's signature tailored blazers, perfect for postgame hobnobbing. An exclusive capsule collection of sportswear in crisp blue-and-white seersucker, inspired by the Côte d'Azur's relaxed cool, is slated for later this year. "St.-Tropez is one of those classic European destinations that represent a unique sensibility," says Browne. "And hopefully this season, I'll get to spend a lot of time on those tennis courts." Here's where you'll find him when he's not serving up aces. CHADNER NAVARRO

The designer, sporting his classic look



Outside the Thom Browne Tennis Pro Shop

A daybreak jog around town

"I like to take eight-mile runs in the morning. There's always a new view to discover, a new route to take. If you go early enough, while the village of St.-Tropez is still asleep, you'll have the narrow streets around the port to yourself. You get to soak in the history, the architectural lines. Sometimes I'll take a few more laps around La Citadelle or run up and down Rue Gambetta before all the shops open."

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Beyond quality antiques, shoppers can find fresh produce for sale at the biweekly Places des Lices market

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SENEQUIER

The beloved portside Café Sénéquier

Stop to take it all in

"After my run, I like to ease into one of the bright red chairs at the Café Sénéquier, an icon since 1887. It's where everyone goes—for the energy, the people-watching. There is no better place to start your day, sipping a coffee and observing the passersby as the port comes alive."

In search of stemware

"St.-Tropez is a shopper's paradise. Along the many winding streets are treasures to be found at shops like Objets Saint-Tropez, for quirky trinkets, or at the market on Places des Lices, held on Tuesdays and Saturdays. But I'm almost always on the hunt for my favorite item: antique coupes to add to my collection, especially from Baccarat."

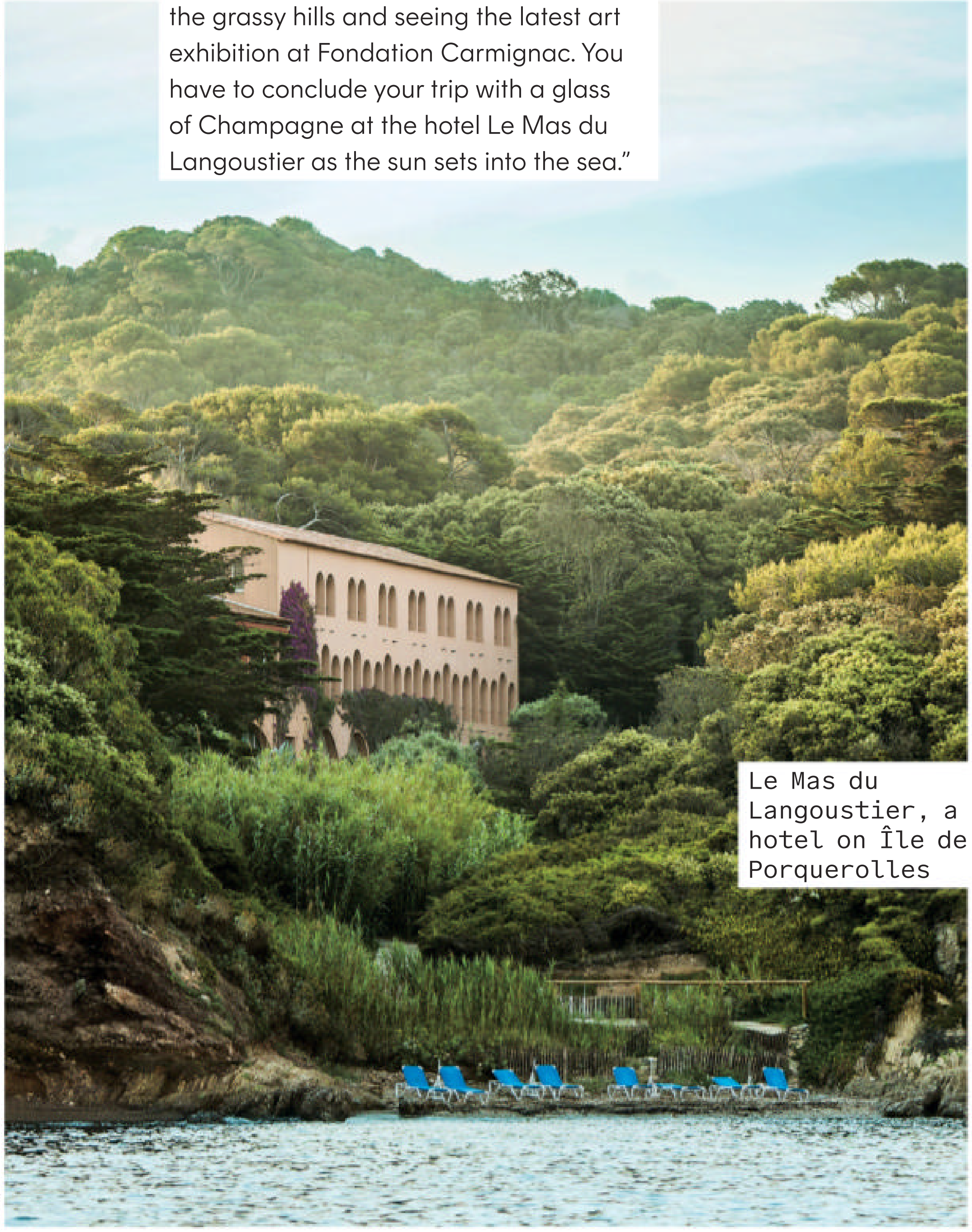
South of France glamour on display in the St.-Tropez harbor

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALASTAIR NICOL, THOM BROWNE, VIA TOLILA

German artist Nils-Udo's Carrara marble eggs at La Fondation Carmignac, on Île de Porquerolles

The ideal day trip

"I'll visit Île de Porquerolles, located about 90 minutes south of St.-Tropez by ferry, for a dreamy afternoon of strolling through the grassy hills and seeing the latest art exhibition at Fondation Carmignac. You have to conclude your trip with a glass of Champagne at the hotel Le Mas du Langoustier as the sun sets into the sea."



Le Mas du Langoustier, a hotel on Île de Porquerolles

Dinner and dishing à la française

"You come to Chez Camille for a classic French meal, like a bouillabaisse. Whether it's from the sea or the land, it will be expertly and simply prepared. There are people from everywhere running into old friends, making new ones. It's a beautiful reminder that in the summer the world comes together in St.-Tropez."

Clockwise from right: Eco-resort Kisawa Sanctuary's thatched wellness center; the newlyweds at Kisawa's Baracca beach bar; the remote stretch of Benguerra Island coastline where the resort sits; Kisawa's very own pizza tuk-tuk

PEACE AND LOVE

For their honeymoon, actor Sophia Bush Hughes and entrepreneur Grant Hughes planned an African adventure that allowed them to give back

Social impact might not immediately come to mind when thinking about a honeymoon, but Sophia Bush Hughes and Grant Hughes are not your average newlyweds. The duo used their June wedding in Tulsa to spotlight the issues and causes closest to their hearts—including a tour of the city's historic freedom colony of Greenwood and a registry through which guests could donate to nonprofits. Their postnuptial celebration was just as thoughtful. "We wanted to take a trip that was a milestone for us but also really people- and planet-inclusive," says Bush Hughes. The couple hit a few eco-focused stops on their itinerary but found that their time at Kisawa Sanctuary on Benguerra Island in Mozambique, a resort known for its marine-conservation efforts and strong ties to the local community, left them most inspired. AS TOLD TO MEGAN SPURRELL

DEEP DIVE

"Part of our stay was funding scientific research for the area's marine reserve. There are endangered mammals whenever you're out on a boat—we spotted the biggest sea turtle I've ever seen in my life. It was my wingspan. About six feet across. The divemaster and I were losing our minds." —GRANT

A VIEW TO REMEMBER

"We drove through the surrounding villages to reach this beautiful sand dune. You do a zigzagging hike up. By the time we got to the top, it was golden hour. There was a full picnic and two chairs for us to watch the sunset together. It was breathtaking." —SOPHIA

NEW FRIENDS

"We would hang at Baracca, the little beach bar, and chat with the staff as we had a sunset cocktail. They were all locals. Once they figured out that we were into records, they showed us this huge collection. They would let us borrow some and take them back to play on the vintage turntable in our room." —GRANT

THE ARTIST'S TOUCH

"On most of the bookshelves, there were these baskets woven in traditional style by women on the island. Everything about Kisawa's design felt intentional and had more of a relationship to it surroundings than anywhere we'd been before." —SOPHIA

PHOTOGRAPHS: ELSA YOUNG, SOPHIA BUSH

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Via del Governo Vecchio, in Rome's Centro Storico

ROMAN HOLIDAY

A pair of standout openings position the Eternal City as a luxury-hotel town on par with London and Paris

The arrival of new Six Senses and Bulgari locations in Rome over the next few months represents a big step forward for a city that is evidently prioritizing high-end brands that pull in a spendier, more exclusive crowd. The **Six Senses Rome** (*from $900; sixsenses.com*), which opens this month just off the commercial Via del Corso, is the first truly urban property for the wellness-and-sustainability brand. Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola, known for her tasteful, intelligent approach at hotels like Il Sereno in Lake Como, set about updating the 18th-century Palazzo Salviati Cesi Mellini with local, sustainable materials like travertine and cocciopesto plasterwork. The suites feel like modern sleep-aways inside a space that retains many of the original features designed by original architect Tomaso de Marchis. There are unexpected details for a hotel surrounded by so much urban hubbub, including a diminutive botanical garden and rooftop space that hosts yoga classes. The centerpiece is the multifloor wellness space, which includes a Roman bath–style spa with a caldarium, tepidarium, and frigidarium (the Romans understood the health benefits of icy plunges long before they got cool on Instagram). “We were going for elements of a spa that you don't find in urban environments,” says Francesca Tozzi, the general manager of Six Senses Rome.

By contrast, the reimagined postwar office building that houses the **Bulgari Hotel Roma** (*from $1,590; bulgari.com*) feels like the future for this ancient city. Just off the Piazza Augusto Imperatore, an area in the Centro Storico known for its Ara Pacis tomb, Bulgari's hometown flagship will open this summer with 114 antiques-filled suites and a reading room dedicated to the history of jewelry, becoming the first major hotel brand in this part of town. It's no surprise, given that this is Bulgari, that artisanship is a major theme. A 753-square-foot mosaic from Neoclassical master Ferruccio Ferrazzi covers the southern facade; patterns in the spa pay homage to Rome's Baths of Caracalla, which have inspired Bulgari's signature pieces over the years. Despite their newness, these two lovely hotels are adept in their ability to continually remind you exactly where you are. ONDINE COHANE

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GETTING DOWN, DOWN UNDER

Cool new hotels, accessible dining, and a revived nightlife scene are making Sydney the Southern Hemisphere's hottest city

TAMARAMA S.L.S.C.

Tamarama Beach, as seen from the Bondi to Coogee coastal walk

Some happy news, mate: Sydney is open again. Since Australia lifted some of the tightest COVID-19 border restrictions anywhere, the Emerald City has come roaring back, reviving the easygoing, inclusive culture it's so famous for. That means new boutique hotels that have Sydneysiders in mind as much as they do visitors. Top chefs are channeling their energies into inventive casual restaurants. And then there is the nightlife: The wildly unpopular lockout laws that decimated Sydney's once lively after-hours scene for nearly a decade have been repealed, leading to new openings and 24-hour licenses. You'll get a taste of the city's buzzing new energy at this month's World Pride, a parade of drag shows, cultural programs, and general cheer that celebrates Sydney's thriving gay community and its impact on LGBTQ+ culture around the world. But if you can't get down here now, no worries. Aussies know how to make a good thing stick around. CHLOE SACHDEV

→

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES WESTMAN

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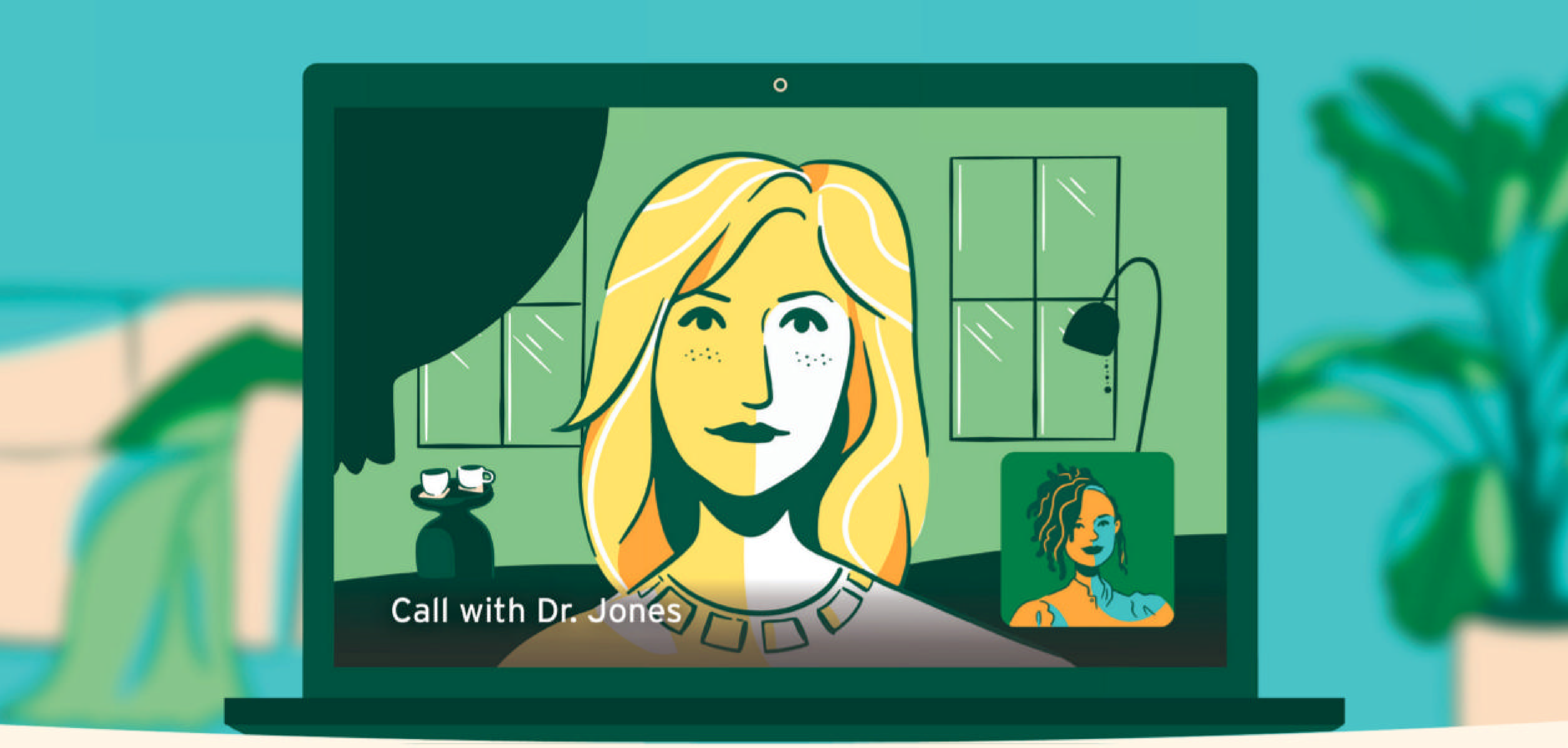

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A fresh seafood plate at The Rover, in Surry Hills

Life on the water in Sydney Harbour

Leading Sydney chef Kylie Kwong's latest project is Lucky Kwong

Easygoing Eats

Some of Sydney's best chefs are swapping formal service for casual, approachable dining

In recent years, Sydney's food scene has reached a level on par with Melbourne, usually thought of as Australia's culinary capital. Now the masters behind the city's rise are shifting gears, creating more accessible spaces to enjoy their excellent dishes. Among them is **Lucky Kwong,** a lunchtime canteen-style restaurant by acclaimed modern-Chinese chef Kylie Kwong, where the small menu features modern Cantonese dishes with native Australian ingredients. Superstar Neil Perry has opened **Next Door,** a pocket-size walk-in bar adjacent to his elegant fine-dining establishment Margaret, with cheeseburgers, eggplant parmigiana, and antipasto plates. Inland in Surry Hills, **Liquid & Larder,** whose opulent restaurants include Bistecca and The Gidley, has taken over the legendary institution **The Rover,** serving a seafood-inspired bistro menu. At **Mod.Dining,** at the spanking new Sydney Modern Project in the Art Gallery of NSW, Clayton Wells, who cut his teeth at the high-end Automata, is slinging casual plates of fried-prawn sandwiches, salt-and-vinegar puffed pork skins, and spanner-crab noodles. And, coming soon, Australia's acclaimed fish butcher Josh Niland and his wife, Julie, are taking over much-loved Paddington pub **The Grand National Hotel,** which will become home to his restaurant **Saint Peter,** with 14 guest rooms attached.

The Insider

Ben Graetz, co-creative director of this month's World Pride, on his favorite LGBTQ+ spots for the celebrations and beyond

» UNIVERSAL
"This long-standing pub is on Oxford Street, the spiritual home of Sydney's LGBTQ+ rights movement, where the city's first Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras was held in 1978."

» CARRIAGEWORKS
"During the festival, this creative-arts space will be showcasing performances from the First Nations LGBTQ+ community, including *RuPaul's Drag Race* star Kween Kong."

» THE BEARDED TIT
"This famous neighborhood queer bar in Redfern, which hosts emerging and independent artists, is a Sydney institution. It is always a fun place to be!"

» THE IMPERIAL ERSKINEVILLE
"An icon! Impy, as it's known, is world-famous thanks to *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.* It hosts drag bingo and lip-sync battles, and also has a great restaurant."

The lobby at Sydney's Ace Hotel is used from day to night

Oxford House takes its cues from old California motels

The Strand Hotel in Darlinghurst is a new favorite spot for locals

Community Spirit

Long notorious for its stiff, branded hotels, Sydney has welcomed a new crop of indies tailor-made for just hanging out

» **Ace Hotel Sydney** The lobby of this trendy Surry Hills addition is filled with keyboard-tapping freelancers by day and a DJ commanding a lively crowd by night. The *Sydney Morning Herald* just named Kiln, the newly opened rooftop eatery, Australia's Best New Restaurant for its seafood and vegetarian-slanted menu. *From $359; acehotel.com*

» **Oxford House** Inspired by the motels of Southern California, this playful hotel signals a revitalization of this stretch of Paddington, pulling in a set that likes to brunch poolside before checking out the weekend art shows. *From $175; oxfordhouse.com.au*

» **The Strand Hotel** Designed with the help of George Gorrow, the cofounder of cult denim brand Ksubi, the French bistro at this 17-room hotel serves dollops of caviar and steak frites, while the Strand Rooftop is a trendy spot for a cocktail. *From $229; strandhotel.com.au*

» **Capella Sydney** This 192-room hotel opening in March brings the Indigenous community in through culture-oriented programming. Guests will learn about native culture from elders including Aunty Margaret, a leader in Indigenous education reform. *From $550; capellahotels.com*

PHOTOGRAPHS: DOMINIC LONERAGAN, ELISE HASSEY, ANSON SMART, OXFORD HOUSE, THE STRAND HOTEL

Up All Night

Sydney is back to being a 24-hour party town. Here's how to tackle the best of the new clubs

» SHADES

Vibe: Cool cultural space below Central Station
When to go: 7 p.m.
Crowd: Dates and artsy groups gearing up for the night
Drink to order: A glass of Hunter Valley Albarino

» PLEASURES PLAYHOUSE

Vibe: Ticketed dance parties run by Sydney crew Heaps Gay
When to go: 7 p.m. or 9 p.m., depending on entry time
Crowd: Inclusive club kids
Drink to order: A G&T with gin from local distillery Archie Rose

» THE ABERCROMBIE

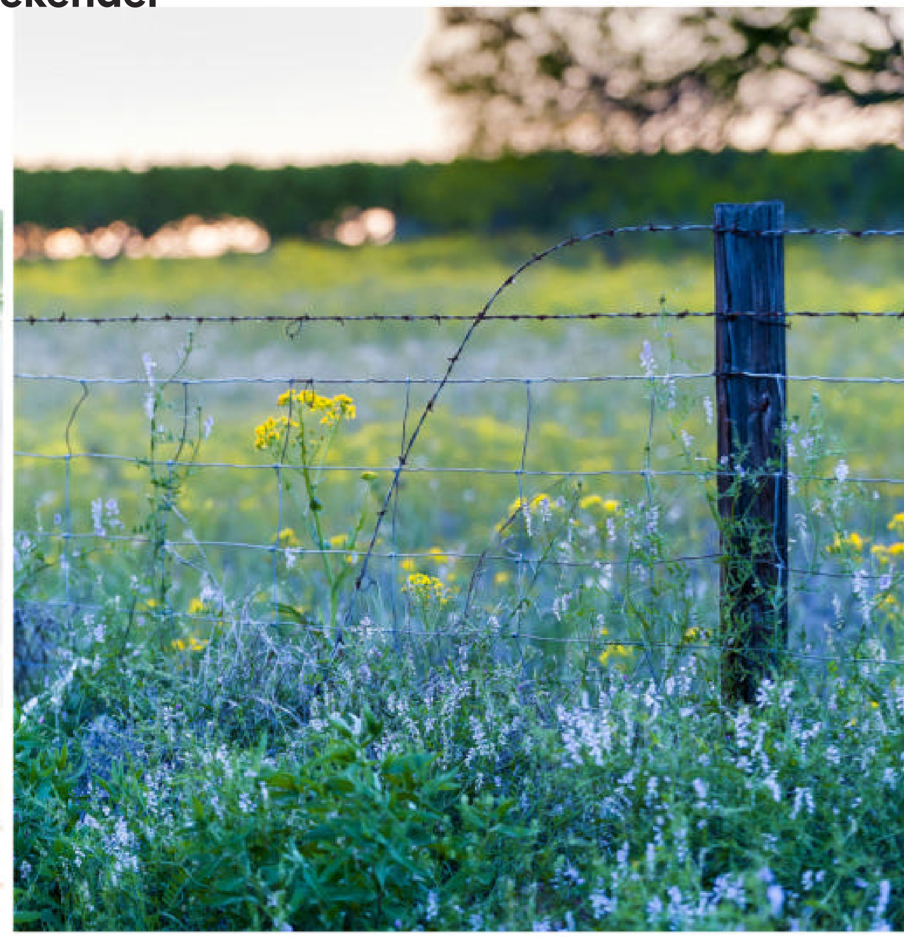
Vibe: Old-school boozer now with a 24-hour license and three distinct bars in one
When to go: 10 p.m.
Crowd: The dance-till-dawn set
Drink to order: The new sgroppino, or boozy slushy

» CLUB 77

Vibe: The original indie nightclub is back seven days a week
When to go: 1 a.m. (and don't leave before 4 a.m.)
Crowd: Cool kids of the aughts rekindling their club days
Drink to order: Bottled cocktails from small-batch producer Big Mood

...and where to nurse your hangover

Sydney's iconic hangout **Icebergs** has just reopened its glass-fronted dining room. Go for lunch, order the crispy prawns along with whichever hair of the dog you prefer, then jump in their legendary rock pool, Sydney's most reliable cure for a heavy night out.



READY AND RARING TO GO

The once-sleepy Texas Hill Country town of Fredericksburg, now a legitimate wine destination, is primed for its moment in the sun

On a balmy spring Saturday in downtown Fredericksburg, sunlight sparkles on the windows of Main Street's historic limestone buildings. The thoroughfare is bustling, kids eat ice cream cones as their parents wander in and out of stylish shops and art galleries, and friends catch up over huge steins of Hefeweizen at a shady biergarten. There's a small-town charm to the place, almost Mayberry-esque but hipper. It's hard to believe that not long ago Fredericksburg was a snoozy place visited mostly by San Antonians who would make the 70-mile drive to spend an afternoon poking around the antiques stores, admiring the fields of wildflowers that erupt in kaleidoscopic glory every April, and picking up a flat of sweet Hill Country peaches from a fruit stand.

Then, a little over a decade ago, winemakers discovered that the mineral-rich soil and dry weather of Fredericksburg were ideal for growing grapes. Today, although Texas Wine Country lacks the national profile of its brethren in the west, it's a major tourist attraction for the state and one of the fastest-growing domestic wine regions; the Texas Hill Country AVA is the third-largest in America. Most weekends, the wineries along the Wine Road 290, a 45-mile-long stretch of highway between Johnson City and Fredericksburg, are filled with locals, weekenders, and road-trippers on their way to Marfa or Big Bend National Park who have stopped by the striking new tasting areas of

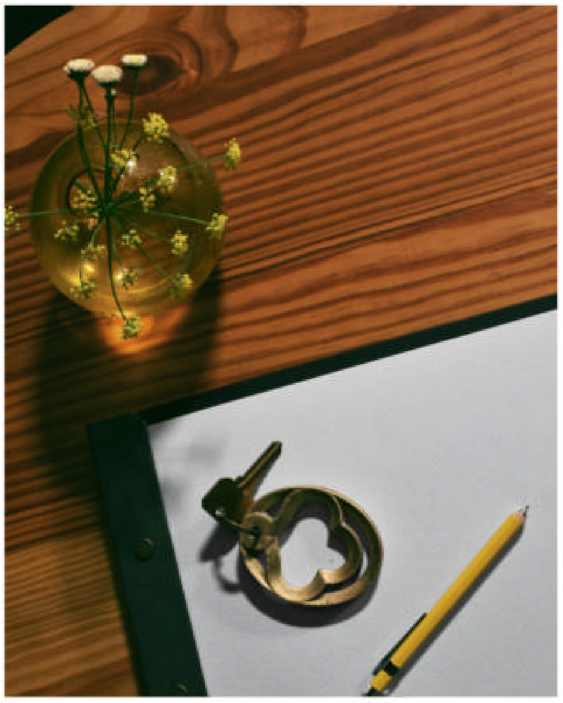
PHOTOGRAPHS: WENDY BOWMAN BUTLER, CAVAN IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES, ALBERT HOTEL, THE SPEAKEASY AT SALVATION SPIRITS, THERESA FEATHERSTON

venues like Alexander Vineyards and Heath Sparkling Wines for a glass or two.

Not surprisingly, the fast-growing wine scene ushered a broader entrepreneurial energy into Fredericksburg, which led to a deft reimagining of the town's historic edifices. Chef Jordan Muraglia and artist Richard Boprae, who turned a three-story landmark building into an art gallery and the upscale restaurant Vaudeville, were pioneers. So were John and Evelyn Washburn, whose Otto's German Bistro serves up dishes that tap into the town's history. (It was settled by German immigrants in 1846 and named after Prince Frederick of Prussia.) The couple has since opened several more popular Fredericksburg restaurants, including the new farm-to-table Italian spot Alla Campagna.

In the early months of the pandemic, an influx of adventurous transplants looking for more space and a slower way of life accelerated the Fredericksburg boomlet. In late 2020, Houstonites Nick and Alice Adair arrived in town to open The Trueheart Hotel, where breakfast baskets filled with hot buttermilk biscuits are delivered to guests in each of the property's 13 cottages, which are outfitted with Pierre Frey fabrics and locally sourced antiques. More recently, Fredericksburg newbies Hannah Copes and Kelsey Morgan began selling custom hats at their Felt Boutique. In an ornate gingerbread-style home just off the main square, Marcus and Leanne Holley operate San Saba Alchemic, a luxe line made with cold-pressed oil from Texas pecans, and San Saba Soap Company, which develops custom fragrances for upscale hotels like Auberge's Commodore Perry Estate in Austin.

Opening soon is the Albert Hotel, which will provide a welcome option to all the new visitors flocking into town. Texas-based architect Clayton Korte transformed four historic buildings (including the 1860s-era home of hotel namesake Albert Keidel, a local preservationist) into mixed-use spaces with 110 smart guest rooms, a full-service spa, a sunken limestone swimming pool, and several restaurants. When it opens on central Main Street later this spring, it will give visitors even more of a reason to stay awhile in Fredericksburg. SALLIE LEWIS



This page, top to bottom: A room key at The Albert, the newest hotel in town; patterns and pops of color in the Trueheart's Chinquapin room; inside Carol Hicks Bolton Antiqüités store; the year-old The Speakeasy bar at Salvation Spirits distillery.

Opposite page, top to bottom: Spring blooms; the Mimosa room at The Trueheart Hotel in downtown Fredericksburg

Joo Chiat Rd
Marshall Lane

From left: The bright façade of the Black Earth Art Museum on Joo Chiat Road; a classic English breakfast at buzzy Common Man Coffee Roasters

PAST, PRESENT

East of Singapore's skyscraper jungle, a neighborhood of picturesque heritage buildings is home to a rising creative class

Singaporeans mostly think of the gritty Joo Chiat suburb as a place to find great hawker dishes, like the coconut-tinged laksa at 328 Katong Laksa and the peppery crab at Eng Seng. But the area, only 15 minutes from downtown Marina Bay, is also one of Singapore's best-preserved Peranakan strongholds. The imprimatur of that ethnic group, descended from Chinese migrants who settled in Singapore and elsewhere in Southeast Asia starting in the 15th century, is highly evident in its colorful shophouses, one of which is home to the Intan, a heritage museum where locals go to connect with their Peranakan roots. Afterward they stroll along the main drag, Joo Chiat Road, where vendors sling glutinous rice snacks at *kueh* counters. Over the past few years, a new crop of entrepreneurs has moved in: Evading rising rents in hipster hub Tiong Bahru in the west, they've set up artisanal grocery stores, third-wave coffee shops, and homeware boutiques inside Joo Chiat's bright edifices, turning it into one of the city's most exciting pockets. CHRIS SCHALKX

THROWBACK BREAKFAST JOINT

Singapore's kopitiams, Hokkien-style coffee shops, are a dying breed, so locals mourned when beloved neighborhood hangout **Chin Mee Chin Confectionery** shuttered in 2018. Luckily, new owners reopened it in 2021, keeping the old-timey feel with marble-topped tables and candy-striped awnings. Even the menu remains the same: Order the kaya toast (buttery charcoal-grilled buns with coconut jam) and dip it in soft-boiled eggs sprinkled with soy sauce and white pepper. The kopi, a dark blend of Robusta and Arabica poured over a thick layer of condensed milk, adds a sugary kick. *Breakfast for two, about $12; chinmeechin.sg*

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS SCHALKX

Pastel Peranakan houses just off Joo Chiat Road now host spots like Crane, below, a coworking and retail space

Knickknacks line the shelves at Crane

Ribbon and thread at Hat of Cain, the haberdashery owned by Bill Cain, above

TROPICAL HEADWEAR EMPORIUM

Since 2012, when Canadian expat Bill Cain set up **Hat of Cain,** his Panama-hat salon outfitted with Persian rugs and framed memorabilia, it has become the go-to for local dandies and out-of-towners on the hunt for top-quality Ecuadoran straw hats, always in demand in this part of the world, with customized headbands and feathers. Cain also stocks a tight edit of linen shirts, bold swimwear with prints by Spanish illustrator Anjara García, and a rainbow of rubber-soled espadrilles made in Spain. *hatofcain.com*

INSIDER LUNCH SPOT

Joo Chiat's revival gained steam in 2021, when the popular **Common Man Coffee Roasters** opened its third outpost in a breezy warehouse along the district's main drag. Remote workers sip single-origin slow-brews as they fire off emails, pausing to nibble on hearty quinoa-and-barley bowls. After dark, the space becomes **Drunken Farmer,** which bakes portobello pizzas from a 160-year-old sourdough starter and drizzles them with spicy honey. *Lunch for two, about $55; commonmancoffeeroasters.com*

DAY-TO-NIGHT HANGOUT

Occupying one of the prettiest peranakan-tiled buildings on Joo Chiat Road, **Crane** is more than a coworking space: Creatives and performers drop in to host comedy nights, weaving workshops, and meditation ceremonies, while at the concept shop downstairs, shelves are laden with Japanese ceramics and tasseled pillows. Keep an eye out for watercolor prints by Singaporean illustrator Goh Ying Ying and scented candles flecked with red agate, basil, and tiger grass by homegrown label Nine Wicker Ave. *wearecrane.com*

NATURAL WINE MECCA

A neon-lit staircase behind an unassuming door leads to the oenophiles' wonderland that is **Wine Mouth,** Singapore's first shop dedicated to natural bottles. Googly-eyed Roman statues peer over rows of fizzy Tuscan pét-nats, wild-fermented Danish fruit ciders, and small-batch orange wines shipped in from Greece and Australia. The chatty staff is happy to help you choose. Check the website for the schedule of tasting workshops, yoga sessions, and boozy art classes. *winemouthsg.com*

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WHY WE TRAVEL

the experiences that change how we see the world

Into the Horizon

Modern-day explorers on Seabourn's new expedition ship follow the intrepid souls who first attempted to navigate the wilds of Greenland—but with a lot more comfort. By Darrell Hartman

PHOTOGRAPH: RENEE & MATTHEW HAHNEL

On Greenland's Arctic Circle Trail, in Sisimiut

WHY WE TRAVEL

» cruise

A typical home in the village of Upernavik

An iceberg in Disko Bay on the west coast

The biscuit-colored mountains of Ammassalik Fjord, in southeastern Greenland, were patched with snow and wreathed in mist. It was spitting rain, and the turquoise waters were scattered with icebergs of fantastical shapes: One looked like a shark's tooth, another like a skate park, and another like an accordion, neatly pleated. The underbellies of these chunks of faraway glaciers were of the deepest, most delicious blue.

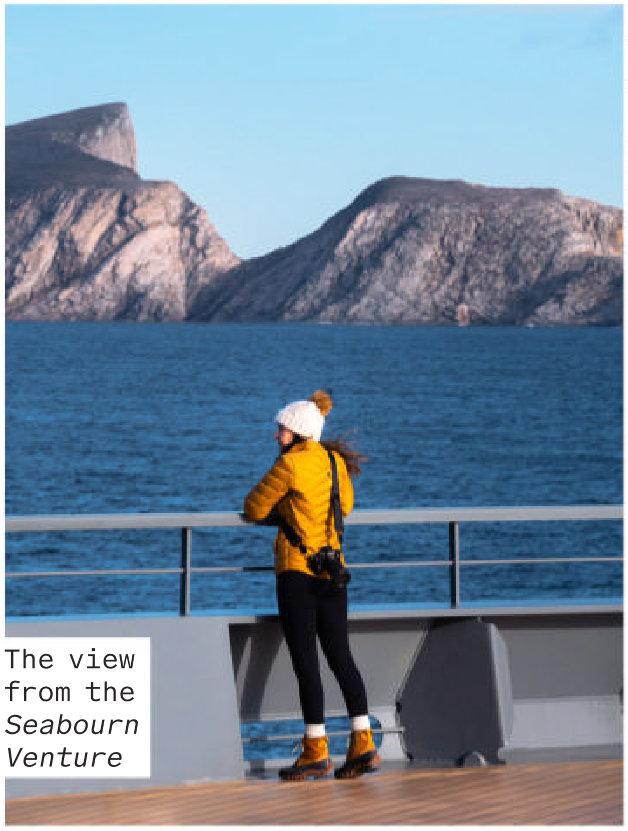
It would be going too far to say that I've ever felt *polarhullar*—a wonderful Danish word meaning "a yearning for the polar regions." I do, however, get a hankering for the cold air, empty spaces, and moody weather of the remote North. But I also value warm showers, Wi-Fi, and a well-made negroni. Exploring Greenland aboard the roomy *Seabourn Venture* suited my preferences perfectly.

I had another reason for a coastal tour of the world's largest island. I've spent the past four years researching and writing a book, *Battle of Ink and Ice,* which is partly about turn-of-the-20th-century polar explorers. I'm fascinated by what compelled them to seek out such hostile and unknown environments. Wealth and fame were motivators, as I've learned from their writings, but the Arctic itself exerted a certain magical pull—one that 21st-century luxury travelers have begun to discover. This sailing gave us access not only to these epic and unforgiving lands but also to the communities and cultures that have shaped them.

Seabourn invested a reported $200 million in its first purpose-built expedition vessel, where the onboard amenities include a heated clothes-drying cabinet in every suite. I tossed my base layer, hat, and gloves into mine after our wet Zodiac iceberg tour of Ammassalik Fjord before visiting the sauna, which had views toward the mist and mountains. This was day 3 of a planned 14, and the inauguration of a pleasant routine: a taste of the near-Arctic elements, followed by the sort of pampering that those 19th-century explorers—and even today's Greenlanders, we should acknowledge—never dreamed of.

On our first few days, we sailed west through the Christian Sound, passing towering waterfalls, and into Aappilattoq village, with a population of 100 and a cluster of red, yellow, and blue homes. We spotted whales and ogled fjords. It wasn't until reaching the 3,000-person town of Qaqortoq that we began to learn how life is lived in Greenland. At the Great Greenland Furhouse, the country's only sealskin tannery, I saw some of the fur pants, anoraks, and kamiks (boots) that 19th-century Western explorers belatedly came to recognize as superior to their own leather footwear and tight woolens. This kind of traditional Inuit winterwear is still made here, mostly for ceremonial occasions, alongside more contemporary styles aimed primarily at the Danish and Asian markets. (Importing sealskin products into the United States is illegal.) In Nuuk, Greenland's largest city and the only place on my voyage I saw a

PHOTOGRAPHS: RENEE & MATTHEW HAHNEL. ØIVIND HAUG



The view from the *Seabourn Venture*

café, the National Museum tells the story of Greenland vividly, from the Viking farmers in the Middle Ages to the Inuit who outlasted them.

The Inuit developed much of the technology that enabled turn-of-the-century explorers to seek the North Pole—a quest the practical-minded natives considered pointless but aided nonetheless, in exchange for hunting rifles and other useful Western goods. Inuit kayaks and dogsleds made it possible to advance more rapidly across the Arctic Ocean ice, and the native diet of fresh, often raw meat helped foreigners to endure subzero temperatures.

Thanks to his embrace of fresh seal and walrus, the peerless Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen came back from some of his Arctic journeys weighing more than when he'd set out. On this last point, at least, many of us aboard the *Seabourn Venture* could relate. The *Seabourn Venture* didn't go near the frozen Arctic Ocean that Nansen and others braved in pursuit of the North Pole. But it did pass Umivik Bay, on the southeastern coast, Nansen's starting point in 1888, when he became the first person to cross Greenland—using skis, which was then considered a novel approach.

Sparse signage near Ilulissat

Unfortunately, a gale kept us from stopping there. But several days later, in Qaqortoq, the fog parted long enough for a helicopter to drop me and six other guests onto a glacier after a 20-minute flight—a wonderfully dislocating experience that felt like being on another planet.

It wasn't until Sisimiut that we entered the Arctic Circle proper and took a memorable two-hour walk along the nearly 100-mile Arctic Circle Trail, past glassy ponds ringed with Arctic scrub that was already, in mid-September, cloaked in fall colors. At the trailhead, we passed a "dog town" containing hundreds of the huskies that some Greenlanders keep for winter work.

Back in Sisimiut, a gastronomic experience had been arranged for us. Let me pause here to explain that I had eaten like a king for nearly two weeks aboard the *Seabourn Venture:* everything from roasted scallops and poached lobster tail to Cornish game hen. I'd benefited from the wonders of modern refrigeration and the 21st-century global supply chain, to say nothing of the skills of executive chef Ainsley Mascarenhas. But here, a simpler array was laid before us, including slick cubes of raw seal blubber and raw minke whale and darker morsels of dried minke whale. The experience helped me understand why, given the choice, most explorers preferred cooked musk oxen over anything that had recently had a harpoon pulled out.

Though Sisimiut (formerly known as Holsteinsborg) often served as an early stopping point for explorers headed farther north, it was the end of the line for us. When I flew back to Reykjavik from nearby Kangerlussuaq Airport the next day, I was well-fed, well-rested, and untouched by seasickness, snow-blindness, frostbite, anemia, scurvy, or any of the other inconveniences, including death, that plagued Arctic explorers of yore.

Apart from the bracing shock of a voluntary polar plunge, I hadn't even really been uncomfortable at any point. Even so, precious hints of a tougher and wilder Arctic experience lingered—in the memories of mist-enshrouded icebergs, the wolflike howls of the sled dogs, and the taste of raw seal blubber.

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The southern façade of Candacraig, a 17th-century mansion

The boot room at the Fife Arms, with Wellies to borrow for hikes

Into the Country We Go

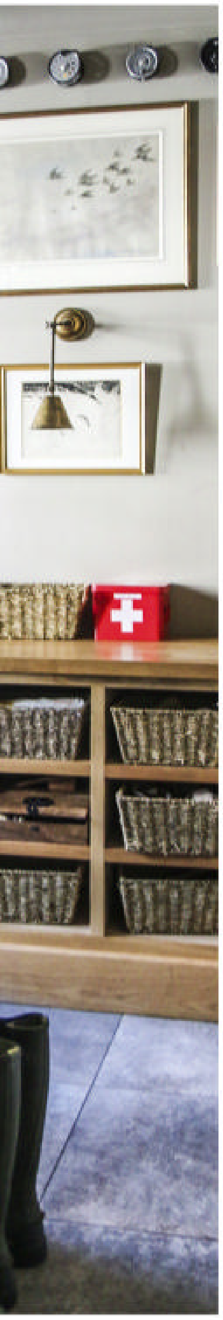
On a multigenerational trip to Scotland, Jo Rodgers makes new memories with her family after being apart during the pandemic

The platform for the *Caledonian Sleeper,* the night train that shuttles between London and Edinburgh, is full of travelers dressed for bed. The departure is late enough that you might want to get your flossing out of the way beforehand, and plenty of people have decided to throw on their pajamas too before leaving the house. My family members—Trevor, Alexander, and Sophia, who've flown in from the States, and my father and stepmother, coming from a vacation in the Peloponnese—are not among them. They arrive for the start of our family reunion shower-fresh, looking incongruously dapper, like they might have been kidnapped from the opera.

Our family hadn't been together since the start of the pandemic. When we started planning this trip, my dad suggested we meet in Italy. But it turned out that I would be eight months pregnant, so it had to be Britain, where I live with my husband, Andrew, and our three-year-old son, Henry. Taking the sleeper to Scotland—a national treasure of a service, but not the *Orient Express*—was my idea for a memorable beginning. And now here everybody was, handsome and familiar, sharing space with adults in flannel onesies.

The plan was to stay in Edinburgh for a few days before continuing north. We rented the 18th-century House on a Hill, a manor with beadboard paneling on Calton Hill that was big enough for the eight of us, through rental amalgamator Plum Guide.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JO RODGERS



Roadside lunch prep at Cairngorms National Park

Early in the mornings, when Andrew and I were awake with Henry, we could hear hikers scuffling in the dark, hurrying to the summit for sunrise. During the day, my dad and I collected groceries from Valvona & Crolla, a specialty shop with tomatoes pretty enough to paint. In the evenings, my brothers and sister walked to a pub on Cumberland Street for pre-dinner drinks while the rest of us brainstormed things that could be cooked in a single pot. Andrew got the cast-iron stove working, and my stepmother, Cristina, chopped chiles for penne arrabbiata.

Our next stop, the Cairngorms National Park, in the forested heart of Scotland, about three hours' drive from Edinburgh, isn't as well-known to foreigners as the western coast or the Highlands. The park is a stretch of thriving green valleys and peat bogs, and close-cropped moorland that attracts shooting parties in the autumn. One evening we exited the main road for a private tributary hemmed by rhododendrons. Thickets crowd the approach to Candacraig, a baronial 17th-century mansion near the River Don that looks like the cover of a paperback: a harled-stone edifice with pepper-pot turrets, surrounded by evergreens.

Over chocolate mousse that night in the tartan-tented dining room, we teased one another about who would be too chicken to go swimming in the Don. The next morning it was 11 degrees Celsius. We put cardigans and fleeces on over our swimsuits. Annie Armstrong, who runs the nature-guiding company Wild Braemar, took us to a riverbank edged by pine trees and yellow broom where we found blankets and coffee inside a pitched canvas tent. Andrew and Alex, both good swimmers, jumped in first and bobbed to the surface, having turned the color of Hawaiian Punch. Though it looked unpleasant, we knew we would want to be part of this story when it was told later on.

We also made it to the wider, wilder River Dee, a few miles south and parallel to the Don. It happened by accident during a day trip to the Fife Arms, the winsome Highlands hotel with the apple-red gables and the dazzling art collection. Our plan was to eat in the garden, where the azaleas were still hanging on, but the weather was so clement that I asked whether we could go farther afield. We sat on leather camp chairs eating cold pork pies and drinking ginger ale, then took a Christmas-card picture with our heels inches from the river, grinning but alert.

But for the most part, our group stayed close to home. We shuffled cards in Candacraig's oak-paneled drawing room, playing spades, heckling one another in front of a fireplace carved with roses. Cristina bought a couple of bottles of marmalade-like whisky aged in Sauternes casks from Tomintoul Distillery. I reread most of *The Moonstone* in the walled garden, which was blooming with lupines and early meadowsweet, honeysuckle, and blue poppies.

The only day of storms kicked up during a tour of the moorland surrounding the estate. It was sunny while the picnic baskets were being packed, but during half an hour of slow-going ascent, hail began to ping off the roll cages. The higher the cars crept, the thicker the fog became, whiting out the landscape.

Eventually we eased off the road, next to a grassy stone bridge over the Burn of Tornahaish, a creek slight enough to jump, and brewed tea on the hood of one of the Land Rovers. Someone handed out wool blankets, and in a lot of the photos from the day, we're hunched under them, clutching mugs, holding burgundy-checked napkins and ham sandwiches. No one was forcing us to stand in the rain—we could have driven back to Candacraig or eaten in the cars—but at some point or another, a collective, punch-drunk invincibility took over. The last picture is of us, blankets off, arms around one another, screaming something. It looks like "Italy."

Home Free

Pushed to extinction by early European settlers, the bison have recently returned to Northern Alberta, marking a new chapter in Canada's history. By Megan Honan

Lilyrose Meyers, a Métis elder and knowledge keeper

I'm face-to-face with a white bison nearly double my size, who is staring me down. I'm not sure whether to run or stand perfectly still.

"Don't worry, he won't getcha," says my guide, Len Hrehorets. He speaks softly, with a slight lilt. A seasoned rancher, he looks the part, with a Western hat perched atop his head and country music blaring from his pickup truck. Along with plains bison and woods bison, white bison were released onto these hills in 2021, the first time they have roamed here in more than 150 years. I've come to a 320-acre area on Hrehorets's property in the remote wilderness of Smoky Lake, Alberta, named Visions, Hopes and Dreams at Métis Crossing, to join a new tour that lets guests get close to these majestic creatures.

The disappearance of the bison—called "bufloo" in Michif, a language of the Métis peoples who have historically lived on these lands—began in 1814, when the Hudson's Bay Company, a fur trader incorporated by English royal charter, issued a ban on the running of the buffalo, also known as the buffalo hunt. This biannual event was hugely important to the Métis, an Indigenous group of First Nations and European ancestry who had by then emerged as a discrete nation. Attended by thousands, the hunt gave rise to various social, political, and legal rituals, including elections of buffalo councils. In addition to providing sustenance, the bison drove the Métis economy as the primary currency of the fur trade.

By the 1850s, Canada's bison were nearly depleted, thanks to the rifle's increased hunting capacity and policies advocating for the animals' extermination—a ploy to force Indigenous peoples into dependence. The government enacted the Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act of 1894, which severely limited local hunting rights; herds were tracked down and moved to reserves where hunting was banned outright. Ultimately, the bison nearly went extinct. The Métis and other Indigenous peoples were left to find other means of survival, including fishing and trapping for smaller game.

Hrehorets and I drive past other newly released plains wildlife—elk and Percheron horses that zip past before fading into the winter landscape. "I've had bison since 1981," he says. "I know everything there is to know about them." Hrehorets's grandfather, who settled across the river from Métis Crossing, hunted and fished alongside Indigenous peoples. That legacy of coexistence and cooperation is part of what prompted Hrehorets to establish a version of Visions, Hopes and Dreams

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROAM CREATIVE

White bison were reintroduced to Northern Alberta in 2021

The new Cultural Gathering Centre at Métis Crossing

in 2019. "I wanted to build a park that would bring people together—to show them the beauty of this land and also honor my grandfather," he says. "But I knew I couldn't do it alone."

In 2020, Hrehorets proposed that Visions, Hopes and Dreams partner with Métis Crossing, Alberta's first major Métis cultural destination. The center, which is connected to a new 40-room lodge, offers various ways to engage with Métis tradition, from art workshops and storytelling sessions to wildlife tours that explain the bison's historical significance to the community. After the bison release in 2021, the organization celebrated the grand opening of the Cultural Gathering Centre and Lodge at Métis Crossing this past fall.

"Métis Crossing was never meant to be a museum, never a place to look at old things behind glass," says Juanita Marois, its chief executive director. "It's about engaging people with our culture and helping them to experience us through their heads, their hearts, their hands. The bison are foundational to that."

The next day, I join resident Métis elder Lilyrose Meyers on a snowshoe hike along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, one of Métis Crossing's activities. "We have just walked in the footsteps of our ancestors; they will provide many blessings for you, just as they have for us," she says, nodding toward the nearby bison. I feel a kinship with Meyers. She reminds me of my great-great-grandmother, a proud Mi'kmaq woman who welcomed friends and strangers alike into her community.

We're standing on the river lot lands where the region's first Métis settlers set up camp in the late 1800s. Now travelers come for the wildlife tour and to learn about the heritage of the Métis people. Nationwide, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), a partner of Métis Crossing, continues to expand its offering of Indigenous experiences, underscoring the connection between these original inhabitants and the lands on which their ancestors lived.

Together, Métis Crossing and Visions, Hopes and Dreams have built something greater than what either could have achieved alone. It comes at a time when Canada continues to grapple with its treatment of Indigenous peoples. In 2015, the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission published its report on residential schools, which sought to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian culture by displacing them from their own; in it were devastating accounts of abuse, forced separation, and death, prompting last year's historic apology from Pope Francis to Canadian Indigenous peoples. But reconciliation can take other forms too; land back and renaming movements have taken root here and in the United States, where national parks have begun returning animals to the care of their original stewards. All are small strides toward acknowledgment, repatriation, and, for some, hope.

Hrehorets and I stand side by side at the wooded gate, watching the bison run up and down the hillsides. The sun is setting, and Hrehorets tips his hat to block its rays. "I have hope for the future," he says quietly. "Life will start again this summer, when the first generation of baby bison is born. They'll only know this land—their home. Back where they belong."

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The bright lights of Myeongdong, central Seoul

Gorging on K-drama, IRL

For a growing segment of travelers, Seoul really can feel like something straight out of a TV show. By Sarah Khan

I was agonizingly late for barbecue on my first night in Seoul when I emerged at Gwanghwamun Square, flustered and overwhelmed, hoping my dinner companions hadn't finished the banchan without me. That's when I saw it: the countenance of a stone warrior staring down at me from his pedestal. I gaped back at him, my galbi cravings briefly forgotten. This was my first time in this plaza, and yet my brain insisted I'd been here before. Amid the disorientation of navigating this unfamiliar place, here was something I recognized—from its role in the 2018 Korean show *Memories of the Alhambra.*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ATLANTIDE PHOTOTRAVEL/GETTY IMAGES, ANTHONY WALLACE/GETTY IMAGES, DIEGO MARIOTTINI/ GETTY IMAGES

GANGNAM
STYLE

A street art installation in Seoul in honor of Psy's famous song

A mural of BTS star RM, in the Goyang area

Even after Psy horse-trotted his way to YouTube glory and BTS built Army, its global fan club, I remained largely ignorant of the Korean Wave, or Hallyu—a Chinese term for South Korea's ascendant cultural power. But as I pined for far-flung adventures during the pandemic, I found companionship in Korean dramas. My gateway series was *Crash Landing on You,* an endearing if implausible romance between a South Korean heiress and a North Korean soldier; I blazed through 16 episodes in 5 days, my heart alternately migrating to my throat and melting into a maudlin lump. The fashion, the food, the tableaux, the personalities: This was my world. I lived here now. I added Korean slang to Google Translate, Korean won to my XE currency app, Korean beauty products to my Sephora cart, and Korean ingredients to my grocery list. These viewing sessions became my closest approximation to travel, filling the passport-shaped hole in my life. By the time South Korea's borders reopened, Seoul had jumped from "someday" to "ASAP" on my travel wish list—and I guess I wasn't alone. "We've seen a huge interest in travel to Korea," said Grant Ekelund of InsideAsia Tours, which offers tailor-made adventures to the country, including K-pop tours. "It's been increasing for years, but the pandemic accelerated it."

After I arrived, I saw recognizable elements all around me. My first evening, searching bleary-eyed for a meal, I found comfort in the signage at Angel-in-Us, the setting of Yoon Se-Ri and Ri Jeong-Hyeok's reunion in *Crash Landing on You.* So what if it's Seoul's answer to Starbucks? At the upscale skin-care emporium Tirtir, I sprang for a purple tube of Collagen Core Glow Mask, whose packaging claimed responsibility for the absurd good looks of Hyun Bin—star of *Memories of the Alhambra* and *Crash Landing on You.* I passed street stalls selling the ppopgi candy I knew from *Squid Game* and the fish-shaped bungeoppang pastries I'd craved while watching *Vincenzo.* For a place I'd never visited before, South Korea was comfortingly familiar.

InsideAsia arranged for a mother-of-pearl manicure for me at Unistella, a temple to nail art where K-pop royalty BlackPink go for their sculptural talons. Afterward, I had lunch at Yujeong Sikdang, a humble canteen where BTS hung out when they were unknown Big Hit trainees. Today it's an Army pilgrimage site, wallpapered with cutouts of the pop stars like the inside of a teenage girl's locker. I ate vegetarian bibimbap under the smoldering eyes of Jimin and J-Hope.

BTS loyalists also pay their respects at Bit & Boot, the salon where members go to have their lustrous tresses coiffed. "A lot of international fans come here just to take a picture of the building," cofounder Choi Soo Chan told me. As I left, my guide murmured that Monsta X's Joohoney was walking past. That combination of words and letters meant nothing to me in the moment, but to a not-insignificant segment of the world's population, my fleeting glimpse of the K-pop star alone would have made the trip worthwhile.

Of course, a culture is so much more than its celluloid depictions, and Seoul, whose rich past still stands out amid its kinetic future, defies K-drama tropes. But when I saw heartthrob Song Joong-ki's handsome face smiling at me from a billboard or dug into a platter of yukjeon beef pancakes like the ones Won-deuk craved in *100 Days My Prince,* I felt grateful for my year of incessant bingeing. Pop culture helped me find familiarity in the foreign, and in the relentless AI-powered forward march of Seoul, that makes a big difference.

InsideAsia Tours offers 12-night Hallyu tours of South Korea from $5,025 per person; insideasiatours.com

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Beneath the Surface

On a journey to explore Portugal's creative traditions, Christine Chitnis meets the craftswomen who are embracing the past while looking to the future

Praia do Seixo, a beach near the coastal village of Santa Cruz

The artist Maria Ana Vasco Costa, in front of a Lisbon apartment building adorned with her glazed-tile façade

As I navigated a terrifying series of hairpin turns along ancient stone roads in Minho, a mountainous region of northwestern Portugal, I began to question my spontaneous decision to road-trip here. I'd made the call in Lisbon a few days earlier over a glass of effervescent Suba pét-nat at Prado, an airy farm-to-table restaurant and market in a former fish factory. I'd come to research my upcoming book, *Patterns of Portugal*—an exploration of the country's visual culture—and my plans were relatively open-ended. So after a few deliciously bright sips, I thought, Why not? I'd go meet the young female vintner behind the bottle.

"Visitors come to Portugal for the architecture and the sights," Tânia Fonseca, Prado's co-owner, had told me as I swirled my pale-yellow wine. "But we encourage our guests to get to know the people behind the stops on their itinerary:

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTINE CHITNIS

the farmers, winemakers, and artists." Fonseca walks the walk. At both Prado and The Lisboans, the nearby apartment building she opened around the corner with her husband and her sister in 2016, producers and artisans take center stage, from the locally sourced ingredients that appear on hyperseasonal menus to the handcrafted textiles and light fixtures that furnish guest rooms. Taking her words to heart, I'd reserved what might have been the only automatic car rental in all of Portugal and began plotting my route.

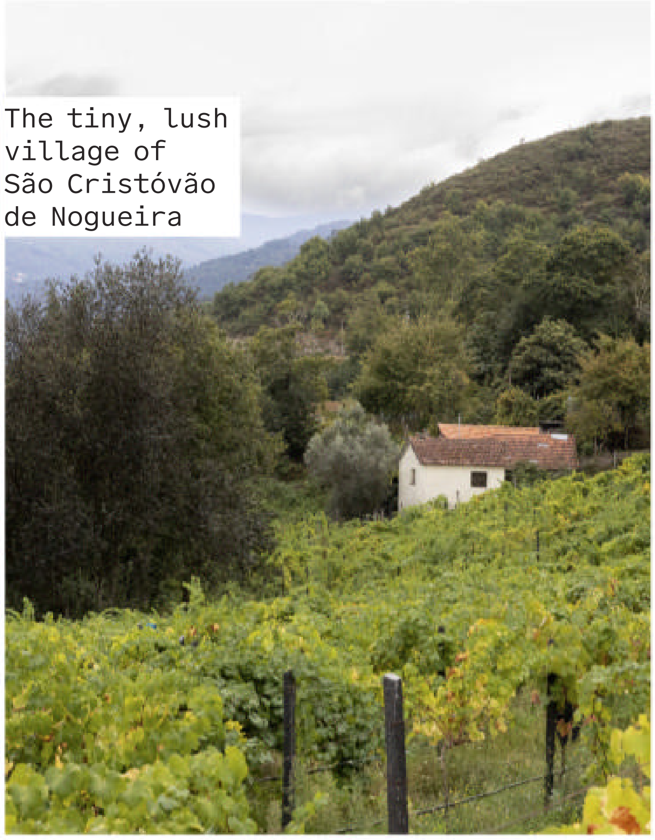
Portugal is compact—roughly 350 miles long and just 135 miles wide. But despite its diminutive size, it was the first truly global empire, a legacy depicted in the ubiquitous azulejo-tile murals showing important battles and monuments that honor famed explorers. As I've often found during more than a decade studying various cultures' visual histories, these beautiful artifacts were largely created by men to document the exploits of men. On this trip, I'd resolved to connect with the female creatives who are shaping Portugal's visual present.

Even before leaving Lisbon, I met one such woman. The artist Maria Ana Vasco Costa, whose sculptural hand-glazed tiles adorn building façades in Lisbon and around the world, took me on a tour of her neighborhood, Estrela, and nearby Bairro Alto, where we visited several of her projects. My favorite was a veneer of sage-green geometric tiles on an apartment building; Vasco Costa pointed out the aberrations in the glaze. "The mistakes and variations that result from the handmade process give the tiles a depth," she said. Later, we had lunch at Instituto Macrobiótico de Portugal, a health-food institute cofounded by the macrobiotic-cookbook author Geninha Horta Varatojo, followed by a chilled glass of Limo vinho branco at Comida Independente, a market that sources artisanal produce, meat, cheeses, and wines from across Portugal.

The next day, I headed north to Porto. Cruising along coastal roads with views of rugged cliffs that plunged toward golden beaches, I reached Duas Portas, an eight-room boutique hotel in a former home whose austere white-washed exterior belies the warm, relaxed rooms within. Co-owner Luísa Souto de Moura, whose mother designed the space, told me that Portugal owes its craft ethos to its unique history. In the late →

Tânia Fonseca, co-owner of The Lisboans, boutique apartments in a restored 19th-century canning factory in Lisbon's Baixa district

Prado Mercearia, a market, bistro, and wine bar


The tiny, lush village of São Cristóvão de Nogueira

The Lisbon skyline, viewed from the Jardim Júlio de Castilho

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Largo da Pena Ventosa, a cobblestone square in Porto

20th century, when other European countries were embracing modernity, the Portuguese were struggling under a dictatorship and mired in poverty. “We had to find a way to use what we had: local tools and materials. Our style was plain, but it had its own poetry.”

The landscape grew lush and mountainous—and the roads increasingly treacherous—as I made my way toward the village of São Cristóvão de Nogueira, home to A Padaria Farmhouse. The refreshingly simple family-owned inn, which opened in 2020 in an old bakery, is full of objects made in the area: furniture crafted by the town woodworker, linens from a nearby market. On my first morning, I woke to a spread prepared by the owner Maria João Sousa Montenegro and her mother, Jacinta: juicy kiwis and crisp apples from the orchard; moist yogurt cake made with local olive oil; and tiny glass jars of homemade raspberry, apricot, and sour-cherry preserves bottled the previous fall, served with crusty bread from a bakery down the road. Maria’s family has lived in this area for three generations; she and her mother have sought to harness the traditional cooking and gardening methods of their forebears to create this bucolic experience.

A week after setting out on my impromptu jaunt, I arrived at Peluda Vinhos, the vineyard in Mondim de Basto where Mariana Faria Pala produces the Suba I’d first tasted at Prado. Pala, who runs the vineyard with her grandfather, aspires to produce wines that highlight the region’s unique varietals: The endemic grapes used in Suba’s popular pét-nats, Azal and Espadeiro, thrive in the dry, warm climate and granite soil. When Pala began working at the vineyard in January 2019, her grandfather had initially resisted her ideas, like creating a low-intervention wine with no added sugars or gas, but since then he’d come around. “It’s important to honor traditions,” Pala told me. “But I’m bringing a fresh perspective to them.”

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTINE CHITNIS

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THE WOMEN WHO TRAVEL POWER LIST

Condé Nast Traveler's Women Who Travel platform celebrates the ways self-identifying women explore the world. Here we spotlight leaders in food, aviation, landscape design, politics, television, and fashion who are pushing all of us to go further

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOSEFINA SANTOS, CAYCE CLIFFORD, AMANDA HAKAN, CAMILA FALQUEZ, RAMONA ROSALES/AUGUST, NINA WESTERVELT.

For all 15 women featured on this year's list, visit womenwhotravel.com on March 8

INTRODUCING THIS LIST is a full-circle moment for me. In 2011, when I started Nomadness Travel Tribe, a community for travelers of color, the travel space looked and sounded quite different. Instagram wasn't even a year old. There were no travel influencers and only a handful of online travel groups actively bringing communities together. Industry leaders weren't speaking about the priorities of sustainability, intersectionality, or equity the way they are today. And while women in tourism were twice as likely to be in leadership roles as in other sectors, most held unstable, low-skilled jobs, earning 10 to 15 percent less than their male counterparts; more than 80 percent of employees working in hospitality and aviation that year were white.

This lack of diversity and gender equity is why I began Nomadness. I wanted to democratize access and representation across the tourism industry. The travel landscape felt like the Wild West, filled with untapped opportunity—and for women like me, the time had come to forge our own paths. Since then, Nomadness has bloomed into a 31,000-member community—78 percent of which is made up of women. Today we are influencing the travel industry like never before: Marriott International's workforce is now 54 percent women; in 2019, the tour operator Intrepid Travel more than doubled its women leaders, from 154 to 342. We are the activists, designers, politicians, hoteliers, television hosts, and community leaders who are bringing creativity, innovation, and empathy to every corner of travel, from the outdoors to aviation to food.

Take Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna. The first Indigenous Cabinet member, she is tasked with protecting and preserving the nation's spectacular public lands—places like the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone. Or Sara Nelson, the president of the Association of Flight Attendants–CWA, who works tirelessly to transform the airline industry into a better place for workers. Then there is television host and culinary evangelist Padma Lakshmi, who uses her platform to educate (and entertain) us about the diversity that truly makes America what it is, insisting that there are always seats at the table for others. Actor Eva Longoria will soon follow in her footsteps, bringing her new show *Eva Longoria: Searching for Mexico* to our screens this spring as one of the only Latina travel hosts out there.

As a 2019 alumna of the last edition of this list, I know the power of being among such groundbreaking women. I also understand that platforms like this one are to be shared—it's an opportunity to pass the mic to the next generation who will shape the way we travel. (I recommend following the work of Ashley Renne Nsonwu, an activist, sustainability educator, and board member of the advocacy group Climate Power.) Emerging leaders can look to the women on these pages for inspiration, knowing that while we have claimed our place in the travel universe, there's still plenty of room—and need—for all of us. EVITA ROBINSON

EVITA ROBINSON IS THE FOUNDER OF NOMADNESS TRAVEL TRIBE, A COMMUNITY FOR TRAVELERS OF COLOR.

the tastemaker

Eva Longoria

WHEN STANLEY TUCCI CALLED Eva Longoria to suggest she host a travel show in the vein of his popular *Searching for Italy,* the actor didn't realize at first how groundbreaking an idea it was. Few travel hosts are women, and even fewer are Latinas. Last spring, she wrapped production on the six episodes of *Eva Longoria: Searching for Mexico,* which premieres on CNN on March 26. Longoria grew up near the border in South Texas and in 2021 founded the women-run tequila brand Casa del Sol near Guadalajara, but she says that even a lifetime of having "one foot in Mexico" couldn't prepare her for the emotional wallop of this experience. "I don't think there was a day that I didn't cry." For the show, she visited traditional fishermen in Lake Chapala, Mayan cooks in the Yucatán, a female master mezcal maker in Oaxaca, and the gender-fluid *muxes* who live on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, among others. Each location, with its unique culture, topography, and culinary traditions, felt like entering a "whole new Mexico," Longoria says. "As wonderful as tacos and tequila are, I think that's all people think Mexican cuisine is." Food, she adds, is "the heartbeat of Mexico. It really is expressive of everything beautiful. It's a way to honor tradition, family, the land, and ingredients. It's a way to celebrate births, marriages, or deaths. There's something always shared over a meal. I equate it with love." LESLEY TÉLLEZ

PHOTOGRAPHS: RAMONA ROSALES/AUGUST, CAYCE CLIFFORD

the advocate

Sara Nelson

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG ON A PLANE, travelers turn to flight attendants. When things go wrong for flight attendants, they turn to Sara Nelson. A flight attendant for 26 years and the international president of the Association of Flight Attendants–CWA for nearly 9, Nelson came to greater prominence during the pandemic as a fierce defender of flight attendants and other workers across the aviation industry. Representing 50,000 employees at 19 different airlines, she fights forcefully against understaffed planes and mistreatment of staff—and for better working conditions and pay. Her latest undertaking? A drive to unionize Delta's flight attendants. Nelson, who has testified frequently before Congress, sees the organization she leads as critical in creating equity for women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ workers navigating a turbulent workplace. "There's no predicting anything; there's no planning for anything," she says of air travel today. "It's just about being as responsive as possible, as quickly as possible, on every level of the aviation industry." Three years after COVID-19 turned travel upside down, Nelson hopes that the hard-won changes that have occurred during her tenure can provide a positive example for other sectors. "I'm excited about the role that aviation can play in bringing people together—and not just physically," she says. "We need to continue building solidarity around big policy ideas and starting movements for progress for the next generations, especially as unions continue to hold management accountable." TARIRO MZEZEWA

the ecologist

Lily Kwong

AS A CHILD IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, Lily Kwong felt an unwavering connection to nature. "I grew up 10 minutes from the main entrance of Muir Woods National Monument. The tallest trees in the world were my neighbors." It's no wonder, then, that Kwong's career keeps her rooted in the natural world. The landscape artist has spent the past five years transforming public spaces like Vanderbilt Hall in New York City's Grand Central Terminal and the busiest night market in Taipei into tranquil pieces of botanical art, using materials like live moss and blood red flowers in full bloom. And while her stunning creations look at home on Instagram feeds, Kwong is set apart by what she calls an "evangelical" devotion to sustainability and conservation. She prioritizes working with endemic plants—most recently in gardens she created for JW Marriott at its properties in Desert Springs, California; Orlando; and New York City. "We're told we need a certain type of beauty 365 days a year, but that's just not natural," she says. "Nature has rhythms and cycles. We really have to learn how to respect and integrate ourselves into that, instead of forcing ourselves on the landscape as we've been doing." Kwong sees the widespread practice of planting exotic non-native vegetation within a landscape as an act that detrimentally "changes environments and communities" and "decimates ecosystems." She hopes other brands will follow the example of JW Marriott, for whom she has several global projects planned, including a culinary garden in Singapore. "Ecological consciousness means a concern for the more-than-human world, where plants, animals, insects, and beyond are considered and respected," she says. "It takes more time and planning, but the rewards are enormous." LALE ARIKOGLU

PHOTOGRAPH: LIZA VOLOSHIN

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the storyteller

Padma Lakshmi

PADMA LAKSHMI ISN'T JUST ONE OF the most enduring voices in food and travel today; she's also one of the most vital. As the host of the Emmy-nominated *Top Chef,* she has consistently prioritized expanding the types of dishes featured on the show—and including more women and minorities. As the executive producer–host of Hulu's *Taste the Nation* (season three is expected this spring), she crosses the country highlighting marginalized communities whose cuisines often get left out of the celebration of American food. Lakshmi doesn't just eat her way through destinations—she dives deep into local cultures, creating room for complex, often painful stories of migration and assimilation. "We all recognize the places in the show, but how many know that there's a vital Thai community in Las Vegas, or about the beautiful Arab cuisine that is in Dearborn, Michigan?" Lakshmi asks. As a host, she draws on her own identity as an Indian American—and an immigrant experience that she recognizes isn't singular to her—as well as those of her mostly women-of-color crew. "I'm not interested in shows with swashbuckling male hosts traveling to gawk at 'strange funky food,'" she says. In shifting the narrative on food cultures in America, Lakshmi is changing the way we travel. "There tends to be such homogeneity to everyone's experiences. Learn to get lost on your travels. Pick a truck stop, not just the Michelin-starred restaurant. Ask a local where their community eats; it will give you a more authentic experience of what it feels like to walk in their shoes." ARATI MENON

PHOTOGRAPH: JOSEFINA SANTOS

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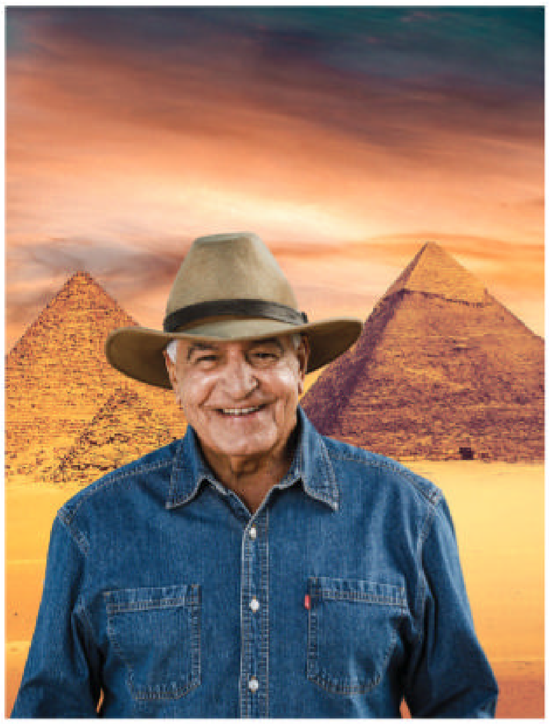

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Deb Haaland

"IF YOU ARE VISITING another state, another county, another city, research that place. What tribes lived there prior to colonization? What tribes still live there?" says Secretary Deb Haaland, Pueblo of Laguna, who made history when she was sworn in as the United States Secretary of the Interior in 2021. The first Native American Cabinet secretary, she oversees 480 million acres of public land—including the 423 sites overseen by the National Park Service, which drew nearly 300 million visitors in 2021. As an Indigenous woman who grew up helping her grandparents in their cornfield and participating in her Pueblos' cultural ceremonies, Secretary Haaland brings a different perspective to the office than her predecessors, most of whom have been white and male. For travelers, her message is clear: "There are sites that are sacred to Native Americans, to tribal communities," she says. "We are hoping that people visit with respect." Not every American has easy access to nature—something that Secretary Haaland is seeking to change. Last summer the Interior announced an influx of $192 million to create more parks and outdoor recreational spaces in urban areas across the US. (A wildlife refuge in Detroit is a recent success story.) Secretary Haaland knows firsthand the power of the land's being open to all people. "I was so fortunate to take my mother to the Pecos National Historical Park in New Mexico," she says. "We were able to push her wheelchair through that site because it was accessible. This country belongs to all of us." PAULY DENETCLAW

PHOTOGRAPHS: CAMILA FALQUEZ, JASON HARDWICK

the creator

Aurora James

BLACK U.S. TRAVELERS SPENT OVER $100 BILLION on travel in 2019. Yet somehow they remain overlooked by the industry. Aurora James, however, will not be ignored. She's the founder of fashion label Brother Vellies, known for its use of traditional African designs, as well as the Fifteen Percent Pledge, which asks retailers to earmark at least 15 percent of shelf space for products from Black-owned businesses. James's efforts are creating and sustaining artisanal jobs in Africa, a place near and dear to her. At the age of 23, she headed to Morocco to backpack the continent and did something most travelers probably wouldn't do—she rented a car from a stranger she met at the airport. She wanted to be open-minded and trusting in her journey, an ethos that animates her work today. "For me, traveling and living and occupying space in places that you weren't born into is about being like water," she says. "You have to let that environment catch you off guard and flow with it instead of force it." This approach allowed James to meet artisans like beadworkers and handloomers from Burkina Faso, who explained that, due in large part to American-donated clothes and the spread of Western fashion trends, their skills were no longer in high demand. When she launched Brother Vellies in 2013, she hired some of those same makers. Rooted in sustainability, craftsmanship, and social impact, the brand has helped redefine luxury. James isn't stopping there—she also hopes to address the lack of curated experiences for Black women travelers. "I would love to do a Brother Vellies hotel one day." NANA AGYEMANG

PRIDE of PLACE

Long a safari-insider destination, Zambia now rivals its more established neighbors thanks to new lodges that offer some of the best wildlife viewing in Africa

By Lisa Grainger Photographs by Crookes and Jackson

Elephants strip pods from acacia trees at the new Lolebezi safari lodge in Zambia's Lower Zambezi National Park, near the Zimbabwean border

CHIAWA
IRONMAN
4x4

the elephants can't see me peeking through a slit in a game hide. But I can certainly see them. I'm so close I can make out their irises glinting in the fading evening sunlight. Just in front of me, a young female squishes forward in the knee-high mud, reaching out with her trunk to rip up fresh shoots of grass to munch. At the edge of the waterhole, a nursing mother drinks nervously, watching out for crocodiles as her calf demandingly pulls at her teats. Matriarchs stand in a line dousing their dusty hides with water. Then suddenly, they're gone: sated, hydrated, washed, and in search of a more protected place to continue their nocturnal feasting.

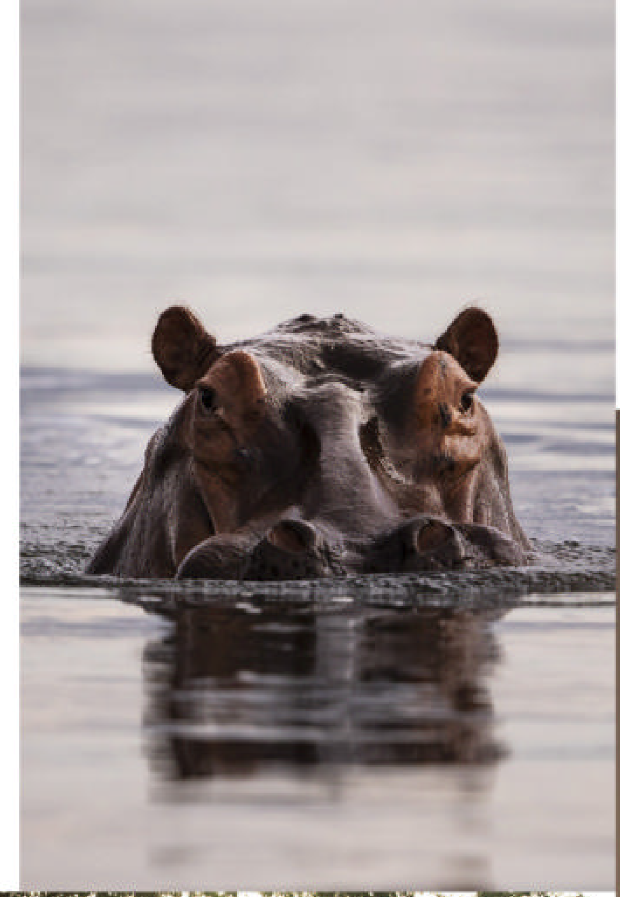
I could hang about for longer, listening to doves coo and ibises caw as the rose skies darken to lavender. But the mosquitoes have started to buzz, and it is time to ward them off with a quinine-rich cocktail and a slathering of citronella oil.

In 1972, when South Luangwa National Park was formally set up to protect a 3,494-square-mile game reserve in eastern Zambia, visitors who survived the potholed dirt road from Lusaka, the capital, would be put up in tents or simple rondavels. In the preceding decades, the area had become a favored destination with hardy men like the conservationist Norman Carr, who collaborated with local Chief Nsefu to set land aside for the country's first safari camp in 1950. This meant tourists could begin paying villagers to view creatures through a camera rather than rifle sights. Meanwhile, the legendary gentleman guide Robin Pope worked with Carr to introduce land-management practices that today have made Zambia one of the continent's environmental leaders.

As I sip an icy G&T and nibble on smoked cashew nuts among lamplit trees on the wooden deck of eight-room Puku Ridge, I wonder what Carr would have made of South Luangwa's first luxury lodge. Reopened in 2019 under new ownership and operated by the respected outfit Chiawa Safaris, the camp received a total transformation by the Johannesburg-based hospitality-design firm Luxury Frontiers, which had previously created tented

This page, clockwise from top: A hippo in the calm waters of the Zambezi River; a rooftop star bed at Puku Ridge in South Luangwa National Park; the river-facing firepit at Lolebezi

Opposite page: Fred Phiri, a guide at Puku Ridge, sets off on a game drive



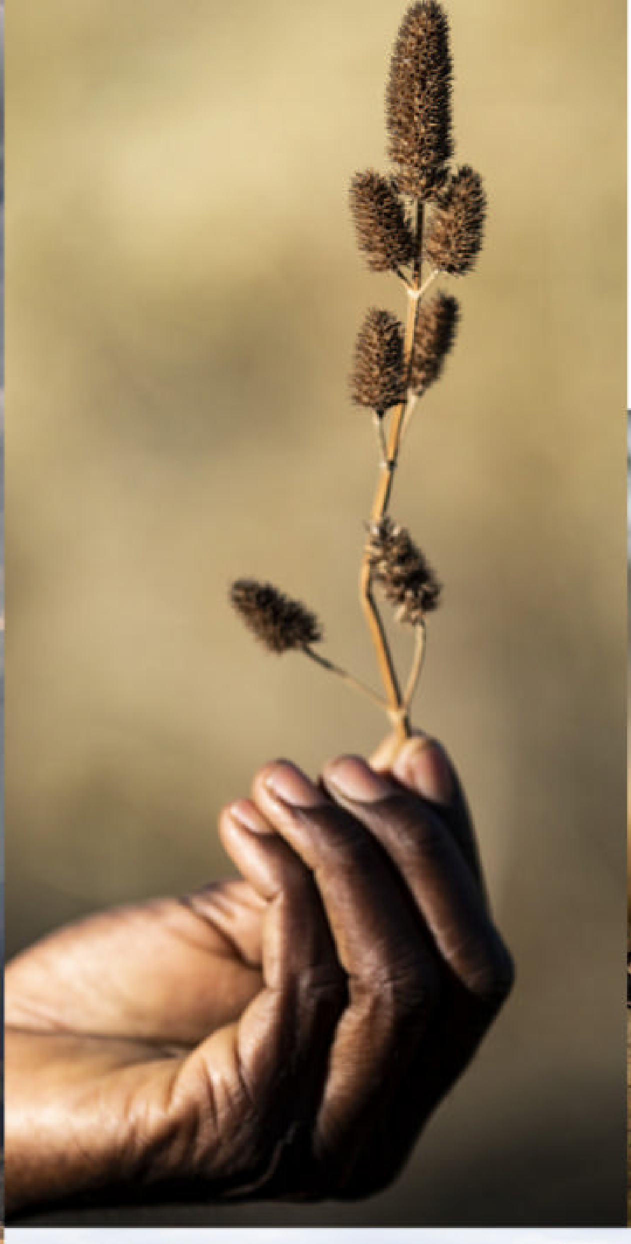
camps for Aman, Belmond, and Wilderness Safaris. The brief was clearly to create a bush haven for safari enthusiasts who don't want to rough it—like its co-owner, the wealthy entrepreneur Zuneid Yousuf. That is why coffees are frothed by a barista, the cocktails are shaken by a cheery mixologist, and poke bowls and crisp Sauvignon appear on the lunch menu—alongside 13 flavors of ice cream.

Set atop a rocky hill overlooking the rich grasses of Puku Plains, the lodge is perfectly positioned for the animal lover who wants to spot leopards feasting in trees and dogs hunting in great packs, but also the layabout who'd rather watch the wildlife from a supine position by a plunge pool. In the afternoon, herds of strawberry-blonde puku mill about. Baboons squat on their haunches amid the black-clay clods, picking seeds and eating insects. In the background, zebra stripes blend into the plains, and the shadows of giraffes loom long over the grasslands. If you're lucky, you might spot a big cat off in the distance as you're taking an outdoor shower or contemplating the sky from your star bed.

It's the star beds, as well as the lovely staff, that really take Puku Ridge to the next level. These canvas-shaded four-posters are set on platforms atop the tented suites and wheeled out at night, swathed in mosquito netting. With flickering lamps to keep critters at bay, and a hot-water bottle and duvet to defrost my icy body during the surprisingly nippy winter nights, I feel snug and safe. I'm relaxed enough to lie and wonder, wide-eyed, at the velvety, almost-plum twirl of the Milky Way above; to see planets rising before dawn; to enjoy the holler of scavenging hyenas and the moans of hunting lions echoing in the moonlit bush below.

Over cinnamon porridge cooked on a campfire the next morning, the guides are particularly excited to have heard lions. Abandoning breakfast, I speed off in a four-wheel-drive with the charismatic Andrew Mweetwa. A guide for 16 years, he has no trouble locating one of the handsome dark-maned beasts. With only two other vehicles nearby, we have the animal almost to ourselves. We're close enough to see his muscles rippling as he swaggers through the tufts of dawn-lit grass.

Like many Zambian conservationists, Mweetwa learned his craft through a school nature club spearheaded by Norman Carr. He also spread the word to guests about Project Luangwa, an organization started by Robin Pope's wife, Jo, to ensure that villagers reaped the benefits of tourism through jobs, education, health care, and conservation lessons. As he drives me across the park to my next camp, past mopani thickets and grasslands, giant baobabs and



palms, Mweetwa discusses the troubles he and his colleagues face, from human encroachment to corruption and poaching. "It's only through conservation and education that communities learn about the power of tourism," he says. He tells me the story of his sister Thandiwe, whom he helped finish school when they were orphaned. She is now an educator helping local women to become conservationists, as well as an Obama Fellow and one of Zambia's leading authorities on predators.

She has certainly based herself in a good place to study predators. Only a tenth of South Luangwa National Park is used for tourism, including just 62 miles of its 290-mile riverfront. It has not only some of the greatest lion and leopard populations but also, thanks to conservation projects such as Project Luangwa and the Zambian Carnivore Programme, thriving wild dogs. Drive to the edge of that area, as I do to reach Time and Tide's Kakuli bush camp, and you're in the middle of nowhere. As Mweetwa says, "If you want game volume, you go to the Serengeti. If you want guaranteed semi-tame game, you go to the Kruger. Come to the Luangwa Valley and you'll get the wild."

Which, for that one night, is precisely what I get. Leaving my bags at the pretty little reed-walled bush camp, where five open-fronted rooms look onto riverbanks dotted with pods of sunbathing hippos, I hike for two hours with Philemon Banda, then the camp's lead guide, and an armed scout. Walking safaris were invented in this park by Carr, whom the guides still refer to as the "godfather of conservation." They share information about the sausage trees (whose fruit is used to heal skin) and the salt bush (from whose leaves salt is extracted by

Clockwise from top left: Flying over the Zambezi River near Lolebezi; local mint plucked near Time + Tide's Mchenja camp; wild dogs fresh off the hunt at Puku Ridge; Lolebezi's main lodge

Opposite page: An endemic Thornicroft's giraffe near Puku Ridge

local tribes). Excrement is a regular topic too. “A guide is really a dungologist,” Banda explains as he pokes a still-steaming pile left by a buffalo. “Dung’s like the Google of the bush: You can find out so much about an animal from what it leaves behind.”

At the dry and sandy bed of the Luwi River—the evening’s final stop—there are footprints of lions, elephants, buffalo, wild dogs, and hyenas. It’s not far from the white-clothed, lamplit table where I’ll be eating and the square mosquito-net “tents” for Banda and me to sleep in. “Don’t worry, we’ll have four fires all around us,” the guide assures me as we settle by the campfire to witness the sky fade from washed streaks of orange to star-spangled black.

What sleeping in a net in the middle of nowhere teaches you is that the bush is a busy place at night. On the other side of my net ceiling, as I inhale lungfuls of cold botanical-scented air and hug a hot-water bottle, shooting stars fizz and satellites blink. Hippos grunt. Hyenas whoop. Chunks of wood added to the fires send up clouds of sparks. Every now and then, the scout marches off to ward off hyenas who have smelled our sausages or flash a powerful spotlight into the undergrowth to stop creatures crashing around from coming closer. I’ll hear later that Crookes and Jackson, the photographers who shot this story, spent much of their night here listening to a pride of 16 lions massacring a hippo—and witnessed the feast the next day.

I end my trip at Lolebezi, in the Lower Zambezi National Park. Of all Zambia’s wildlife reserves and 20 parks, which cover almost a third of the vast country, this one is a particular beauty. Through the window of the little bush plane I’d chartered from Lusaka, the purple-brown mountains to the park’s north shimmer in the baking midday light. To the south, the mopani woodlands of neighboring Zimbabwe stretch to the horizon. And below, the Zambezi, one of Africa’s great rivers, oozes lazily across the tail end of the Rift Valley: in some places calm and mirrored, with giant fig and mahogany reflections glimmering on its surface; in others wiggling through reed-speared plains where hippos graze and white egrets flit. Other than a few safari vehicles waiting at the little dirt airstrip to pick up guests, there is nothing to see but hundreds of miles of trees, water, creatures, and sky.

It’s along this great stretch of pristine river that Irfaan Yousuf (the brother of Puku Ridge’s owner) managed to secure a prime five-hectare concession and persuade Beks Ndlovu, the highly regarded founder of African Bush Camps, to manage it for the next 15 years. With the designers Fox Browne Creative, they’ve built the most sumptuous wildlife hotel in all of Zambia: a polished destination in one of the most ravishing, game-rich parts of the continent. On the short drive from the little Jeki Airstrip, we keep having to stop to take in forests of mahogany and ebony, winter thorn and umbrella acacia, sprinkled with pincushions of the cheery yellow

Clockwise from left: Yellow-billed storks wade in the Zambezi River; a cozy open-sided room at Time + Tide's Kakuli camp in South Luangwa National Park; a young male leopard makes for the shade at Puku Ridge; Time + Tide's sleep-out experience on the banks of the Luwi River

"scrambled egg" senna bush. Lagoons are alive with storks: the circus-performer saddlebill, with its jolly yellow-and-red beak; the funereal marabou; and the agile-necked spoonbill. A giant bull elephant stretches up its trunk to strip off sweet acacia leaves; a buffalo snorts in the undergrowth. And then, finally, Lolebezi: a double-height cathedral of glass, reed, and wood, with six huge well-spaced suites set along gravel paths on either side.

Because the lodge is in such a unique location—at the confluence of the Zambezi and a body of water colloquially known as the "Discovery Channel" because of its rich wildlife—Lolebezi has been designed so guests are surrounded by nature indoors and out. Alongside traditional wood and thatch surfaces, there are walls of distressed copper, clusters of sculptural basket-and-bead lampshades, curvaceous leaf-colored sofas. Bars are topped in green Italian marble whose patterning resembles acacia-thorn branches. Chairs are tasseled in bark-toned leather, ceilings adorned with reed mats. It's the sort of place where you could come for a week and just hang out: enjoying the Ottolenghi-style halal food, exercising while watching wildlife from the glass-walled gym, or having a massage in the spa above a water lily pond. Or do as I do and seize every opportunity to learn from the camp's great guides.

The next morning I am lucky to go out with two: Ndlovu himself and the Lolebezi guide Patrick Siabunkululu. Walking through the stands of winter thorn at dawn, the forest floor licked with apricot light and the air sweet with wild jasmine, we are so close to giant bull elephants that I can see their breath forming clouds. As we amble along, watching armies of giant ants, the men introduce me to honey birds and a porcupine, lovebirds and funnel-web spiders. In the evening, we sit giggling as a pair of playful lion cubs pester their sleepy mother, tumbling about her body. We watch vultures soar and rainbow-colored bee-eaters flitting, a giraffe calf shakily finding its legs, and a baby vervet learning to balance on a thorny bush.

Days are as full and rich as they always are in this beautifully biodiverse part of the planet. And best of all, when I am accompanied back to my bush pad, there are still more treats to look forward to: the sweet, reedy smell of the Zambezi wafting through the mesh doors and the sounds of a lullaby sung by lions.

A seven-night trip with The Explorations Company costs from $10,025 per person, with two nights each at Puku Ridge and Time and Tide Kakuli and three nights at Lolebezi, plus transfers; explorationscompany.com

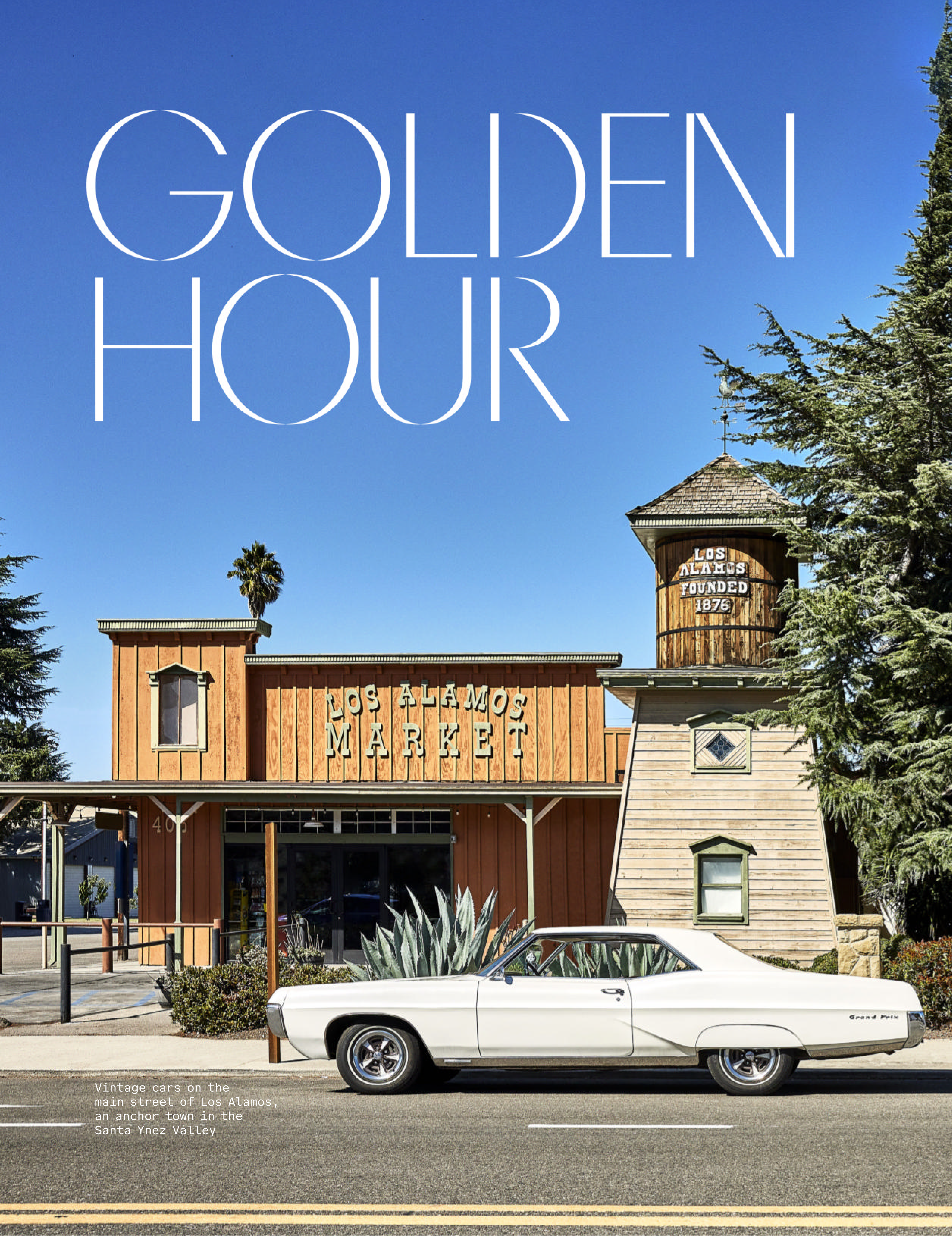
INSIDE THE LODGES

Puku Ridge, South Luangwa National Park
With eight glass-fronted, canvas-lined tented suites, this luxury lodge is run by hospitality veterans Grant and Annemie Parker. In the heart of Zambia's premier conservation area, it lets guests access game on foot or in bespoke Land Cruisers. The rooms, with sustainable bamboo floorboards and recycled-plastic thatched roofs, are outfitted like boutique hotels, with big baths and personalized minibars as well as spacious private decks, plunge pools, and rooftop star beds. Menus feature indulgent dishes (twice-baked cheese soufflé) alongside healthier ones (sesame-strewn slaw with vegetable tempura). There are also little extras, such as a good scope on the deck for birdwatching and a cool hide overlooking a permanent waterhole.
From $1,205, full board; chiawa.com

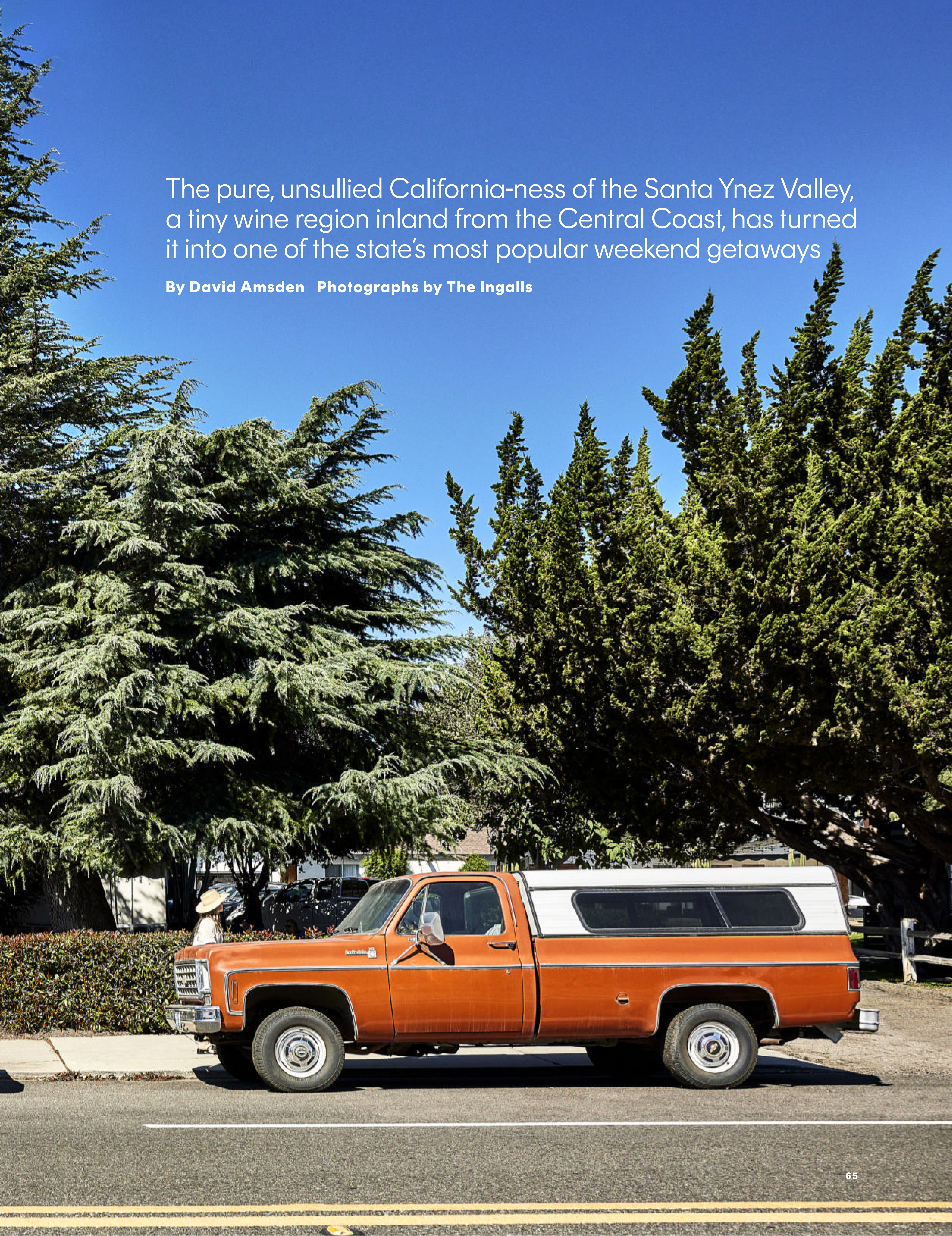
Lolebezi, Lower Zambezi National Park
Johannesburg-based design duo Fox Browne Creative has delivered an extraordinary place to experience one of the prettiest channels of the Lower Zambezi. At every turn there's something gorgeous to look at—a wall of gourds turned into a conceptual-art piece, for example. The six bush suites are cosseting, with nooks for afternoon naps and deep soaking tubs in the bathrooms. The kitchen, outfitted with pizza ovens and popcorn makers, turns out tapas lunches in baskets and salads served on custom ceramics. Extras not typically found in a Zambian bush lodge include a spacious gym, a yoga platform and spa, a library with a TV, and a game room with a pool table. The guides here are world-class, as is the game, which can be spotted from a four-wheel-drive; by foot, boat, or canoe; and from the comfort of your room.
From $590, full board; africanbushcamps.com

Find more information at *zambiatourism.com, lowerzambezi.com,* and *southluangwa.com.* To support conservation and local communities, go to *projectluangwa.org, zambiacarnivores.org,* and *tribaltextiles.co.zm*

GOLDEN HOUR


LOS ALAMOS FOUNDED 1876
LOS ALAMOS MARKET
Grand Prix

Vintage cars on the main street of Los Alamos, an anchor town in the Santa Ynez Valley



The pure, unsullied California-ness of the Santa Ynez Valley, a tiny wine region inland from the Central Coast, has turned it into one of the state's most popular weekend getaways

By David Amsden Photographs by The Ingalls

the town of Buellton

does not initially seem like an ideal place to grasp the allure of the Santa Ynez Valley, a rugged swath of Santa Barbara County that's home to one of California's most intriguing wine regions. There are no rolling hills of grapevines, no lavish vineyards, no fancy hotels. Buellton's most noteworthy attractions are a restaurant that has proudly served split pea soup since 1924 and a roadside curiosity just outside the city limits called OstrichLand USA, where flocks of the springy-necked birds strut in an open field for tourists. The rest, to the untrained eye, is a strip of motels and gas stations.

"Yet this is where a lot of the actual magic happens," Scott Sampler remarked one sun-speckled afternoon. The video director turned winemaker was leading me through Industrial Way, a cluster of warehouses off the main drag that has for decades been a hub of local wine production. Emblematic of the Santa Ynez Valley's back-road charm, the district has in recent years evolved into an unexpectedly prime spot to spend a languid afternoon. There is a rollicking brewery, two small-batch liquor distilleries, a smattering of ad hoc tasting rooms, and one of the Valley's most essential restaurants, Industrial Eats, where eclectic small plates are served with casual nonchalance at communal tables.

Sampler ushered me into his winery, Central Coast Group Project, a spartan space where he works alone crafting Italian- and Rhône-inspired natural wine and blends that are featured at restaurants like Horses, the celebrity magnet in Los Angeles. His tastings are informal affairs, with appointments made over Instagram and wines of astonishing complexity served in a nook cluttered with esoteric art books and vintage vinyl. "It's far from the bougie, supercurated wine-country thing, but that's kind of the point," he said with a wry laugh while pouring me tastes, music blaring, as grapes from a recent harvest fermented in vats a few feet away. "What we've got going on here is a real vibe."

If you live two and a half hours southeast in Los Angeles, as I do, it is this vibe that has made the Santa Ynez Valley the weekend retreat favored by those seeking the thrill of discovery as much as a scintillating Pinot Noir. Though not exactly a secret—the region was the backdrop for the 2004 oenophile film *Sideways*—it has remained overshadowed by Napa and Sonoma, quietly maturing into a destination where old-school kitsch and new-school sophistication braid into something singular. Once hardscrabble cowboy country and still an epicenter of horse ranching, the region is composed of a number of small towns, each with a unique flair. Up the road from Buellton is Solvang, settled by the Dutch in 1911, which looks like a scene from Hans Christian Andersen with its main street of windmills, gabled roofs, spires, and clock towers. Los Alamos, meanwhile, occupies a charming Old West strip so lovingly preserved that you wouldn't be surprised if a midday duel broke out. Los Olivos, once best known as the site of Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch, features a walkable downtown of pastel Victorians. Over the course of a few days spent driving the winding roads among these enclaves, bopping into stately vineyards and slipping into restaurants for excellent meals, I felt connected to something genuinely and distinctly Californian—as opposed to the California packaged for global consumption.

"You come here and you just get instantly addicted—to the raw open nature, that relaxing wine-country feeling without the corporate veil now associated with Napa," said Kimberly Walker, whose adoration for the area led her and two partners to purchase a ramshackle motel on a hill at the edge of Los Alamos nearly five years ago and transform it into Skyview, a sleek hotel with 360-degree views of the Valley's oak-studded vistas. I holed up there for part of my stay before checking out her second, the two-year-old Hotel Ynez, another chicly reimagined motel. Walker's properties have brought new panache to the region while paying tribute to its rugged frontier heritage. "The towns here are still places where every business is owner-operated in the truest sense," she told me. "The owner is preparing your food, the winemaker is pouring your wine, and everyone you meet has a fascinating story of how they ended up here."

Clockwise from top left: Bikes for the guests in the courtyard at Hotel Ynez; Kristen Cramer, owner of ceramics shop Global Eye; a view of the vineyards at Brave & Maiden Estate; wwpork belly at the Inn at Mattei's Tavern, Auberge Resorts Collection

MOTEL

Indeed, to spend time in the Valley is to understand it as a place shaped by people chasing something personal and ephemeral—an ethos that goes back to the earliest days of winemaking here. "No one here cared what anyone else was doing, and it's still kind of the Wild West in terms of a frontier wine region," said Pete Stolpman when I visited him one morning at Stolpman Vineyards, the winery he runs in Ballard Canyon. It's a sprawling 220-acre property where visitors can book hikes followed by a tasting at his outpost in Los Olivos. His father, Tom, a lawyer, bought the land in 1990; Pete, disillusioned with his career in business, started running it in 2009, specializing in Syrah and Roussanne grapes and creating some of the area's most delicious wines.

Driving me through the vineyard's dirt roads in his pickup, Stolpman waxed poetic about the unique topography that led wily pioneers to first plant grapes here in the early 1970s. "We're in what's called a transverse valley," he explained, noting that while most California wine regions run north to south, the Santa Ynez mountains are oriented west to east, allowing for the chill of the Pacific to enter the valley unencumbered. In addition to creating a reliably striking moment every morning—as we bounced along, a blanket fog was being dissipated by the sun—the result is a Xanadu for winemaking: a tapestry of microclimates that makes for a longer growing season and allows a dizzying number of grape varietals to thrive. "The reason it feels like such a young, pioneering place is because, well, it really is," said Stolpman. "When it comes to wine, we're still figuring out everything that can be grown on and made from this land."

Stolpman has seen the area change over the years, especially lately, with pandemic-rattled transplants moving in from LA. New businesses have been springing up at a faster clip, most notably the Inn at Mattei's Tavern, a brand-new outpost from Auberge Resorts in Los Olivos. Built around Mattei's Tavern, a historic inn dating back to 1886, the property introduces a previously unimaginable level of luxury and global recognition to the Santa Ynez Valley. Did Stolpman, I wondered, view the glossy arrival as a threat to the scrappy spirit he was extolling? "Santa Barbara County does not make such developments easy," he told me. "So it's not like we're about to be inundated with corporations." Pausing to take in the epic sweep of land from his vineyard, he told me the recent changes are in keeping with the Valley's roots: "What I like is that it all started with wine in the purest sense. First you had the grape growers, people like my dad, and now you now have everything you want with world-class wine—great hotels, cool restaurants—coming of age alongside the wine industry."

Clockwise from top left: The tasting room at Melville Winery; Laura Newman and Jim Tauber opened Lefty's Coffee Collective in 2022; on view from the pool deck at Skyview, modeled after the old motels of the region; Tom Stolpman sampling a drop from his family's vineyard; a fireplace inside the Inn at Mattei's Tavern, Auberge Resorts Collection; grilled peaches, burrata, and herb crostini at Industrial Eats

When people talk about the culinary evolution of the Santa Ynez Valley, they invariably end up talking about Daisy and Greg Ryan, a young couple who have been central to putting the region on the radar of seasoned foodies. Having cut their teeth working together in establishments like New York's Per Se and Austin's Jeffery's and Josephine House, they moved to the Valley to raise a family. Shortly afterward, in 2018, they opened Bell's, a restaurant set in a former bank in Los Alamos, which somehow manages to be both an unpretentious neighborhood joint and a destination dining establishment. Daisy, who grew up in the area, runs the kitchen, creating hyperlocal set-course menus that riff on classic French cuisine, recently earning Bell's its first Michelin star. Like many Valley visitors, my girlfriend and I took our first trip to the area after scoring seats at the restaurant's small bar, where we spent the following few hours enjoying a meal like no other in a trancelike stupor.

"I could make it sound like we had a clear vision for all this, but it's really been a series of happy accidents," Greg told me when I met him one evening at the couple's newest restaurant, Bar Le Côte, which focuses on local seafood. Dimly lit, with crescent-shaped booths surrounding the main dining room, the place was packed with a mix of weekenders and locals, including Daisy's parents, who occupied a corner table with the couple's young son, Henry. Last year, Greg and Daisy also opened a beer bar in Los Olivos called the Other Room—a burgeoning micro-empire that has become an incubator of local talent and inspiration for other restaurateurs. "We always wanted to have our own spot and realized that we could do something that just wasn't feasible in those larger, more saturated markets," Greg said while watching over the Bar Le Côte dining room, as he does most nights. "There's a funky, frontier aspect to life here. Instead of slipping into a model created by someone else, we're all kind of creating it together."

weekending in the valley

stay

The Ballard Inn An updated take on classic Victorian sophistication, surrounded by the Valley's most stunning hills. *From $279; ballardinn.com*

Flying Flags RV Park and Campground Once a traditional RV park, the property now includes tiki tents, surf cabins, and Airstreams. *From $59; flyingflags.com*

Hotel Ynez The grounds of this former motel have firepits, hammocks, and a heated pool. *From $179; hotelynez.com*

Skyview When it was revamped nearly five years ago, this beloved motel introduced a new elegance to the Valley. *From $179; skyviewlosalamos.com*

The Inn at Mattei's Tavern, Auberge Resorts Collection Just steps from downtown Los Olivos, this exquisite compound from Auberge Resorts is built around a historic inn. *From $1,000; aubergeresorts.com*

eat

Bell's Recently awarded its first Michelin star, this French-inspired spot in a former Old West bank draws pilgrims from LA who drive up for the steak au poivre. *bellsrestaurant.com*

Bar Le Côte From the couple behind Bell's, this restaurant, arguably the hottest in the Valley these days, gives local seafood the European treatment. *barlecote.com*

Bob's Well Bread This coffee-and-pastries spot helped put Los Alamos on the map for discerning gastronomes. A second location opened in Ballard in 2019. *bobswellbread.com*

Coast Range Opened by an all-star team of former LA chefs, this steakhouse transformed Solvang, previously a destination mostly for Dutch pancakes and souvenirs. *coastrange.restaurant*

Industrial Eats The best way to savor the extensive and ever-changing lunch-and-dinner menu is to order the "Trust Me" and let the experts serve you three eclectic small plates. *industrialeats.com*

Nella Kitchen & Bar The carciofi pinsa is the must-order at this Los Olivos outpost from the team behind the pioneering Santa Ynez spot S.Y. Kitchen. *nellakitchen.com*

The Victor Here, the oysters come with a Champagne-cilantro mignonette, tuna crudo is served with pickled peppers, and the Kobe filet mignon is as decadent as it gets. *thevictor.us*

The Hitching Post 2 A local staple for steaks and martinis, and a taste of what the Valley was like a few decades ago. *hitchingpost2.com*

Clockwise from top left: Brave & Maiden Estate; the seafood plateau at French-inflected Bar Le Côte; biking down the drive of Hotel Ynez, toward a Solvang bike path; the living room at the Inn at Mattei's Tavern, Auberge Resorts Collection in Los Olivos

drink

Alma Rosa The winery offers guided hikes and tastings in the rustic ranch house on its epic estate. *almarosawinery.com*

Brave & Maiden Estate Tastings at this sustainably minded vineyard in the heart of the Valley are by appointment only. *braveandmaiden.com*

Bodega The open yard of this wine-and-beer garden in Los Alamos, complete with bocce court, offers a perfect midday or early-evening respite. *bodegalosalamos.com*

Central Coast Group Project Don't miss a tasting with Scott Sampler, maker of some of the most unique and sophisticated wines in the Valley. *ccgpwines.com*

Grassini Family Vineyards At this stunning estate tucked away in Happy Canyon, appointment-only visits offer a transporting tour of the property, which includes a pond framed by live oaks. *grassinifamilyvineyards.com*

Melville Winery This winery with a recognizably yellow villa is known for Pinots and Chardonnays. *melvillewinery.com*

Presqu'ile A family-owned winery atop a hill with views of the Pacific, Presqu'ile recently introduced mezze-style food pairings with its tastings, making it a must for languorous lunches. Reservations required. *presquilewine.com*

Stolpman Vineyards In addition to their lively tasting room in Los Olivos, this extraordinary property in Ballard Canyon lets visitors book guided hikes. *stolpmanvineyards.com*

The Carhartt Cabin This woodsy enclave in Los Olivos, where tastings are often paired with live music, is one of the most boisterous tasting rooms in Santa Ynez. *carharttfamilywines.com*

The Hilt Estate Serving varietals from head winemaker Matt Dees, the sleek, two-year-old tasting room is one of the Valley's most dramatic, design-forward experiences. *thehiltestate.com*

shop

Global Eye This house-goods shop and pottery studio has been a fixture of the Los Olivos creative scene since 2016. *geartco.com*

Elder Flat Farm Clara Malloy, a local farmer, and her husband, Chris, a surfer and filmmaker, run this farm store, which is the place to go for organic produce and flowers. *elderflatfarm.com*

KJ Murphy's At his shop in Santa Ynez, animated owner Kevin Murphy makes exquisite custom hats for the cowboy in all of us. *kjmurphys.com*

land of memory

Francophone Quebec occupies a singular place in Canada's national identity. On a wintry trip through its countryside, Rivka Galchen explores all that sets La Belle Province apart

Veal with charred romaine and cheddar sauce at the Quebec City restaurant Arvi

Opposite: In the Laurentian Mountains, north of Montreal, humble wooden cabins provide a refuge for skiers and snowshoers

PHOTOGRAPHS: KAM VACHON, MAUDE CHAUVIN

Je Me Souviens," say Quebec's white-and-blue license plates. *I remember.* You can drive north or east from Montreal for a whole day and still be in Canada's French-speaking province, notorious for its political and emotional separateness from the rest of English-speaking Canada.

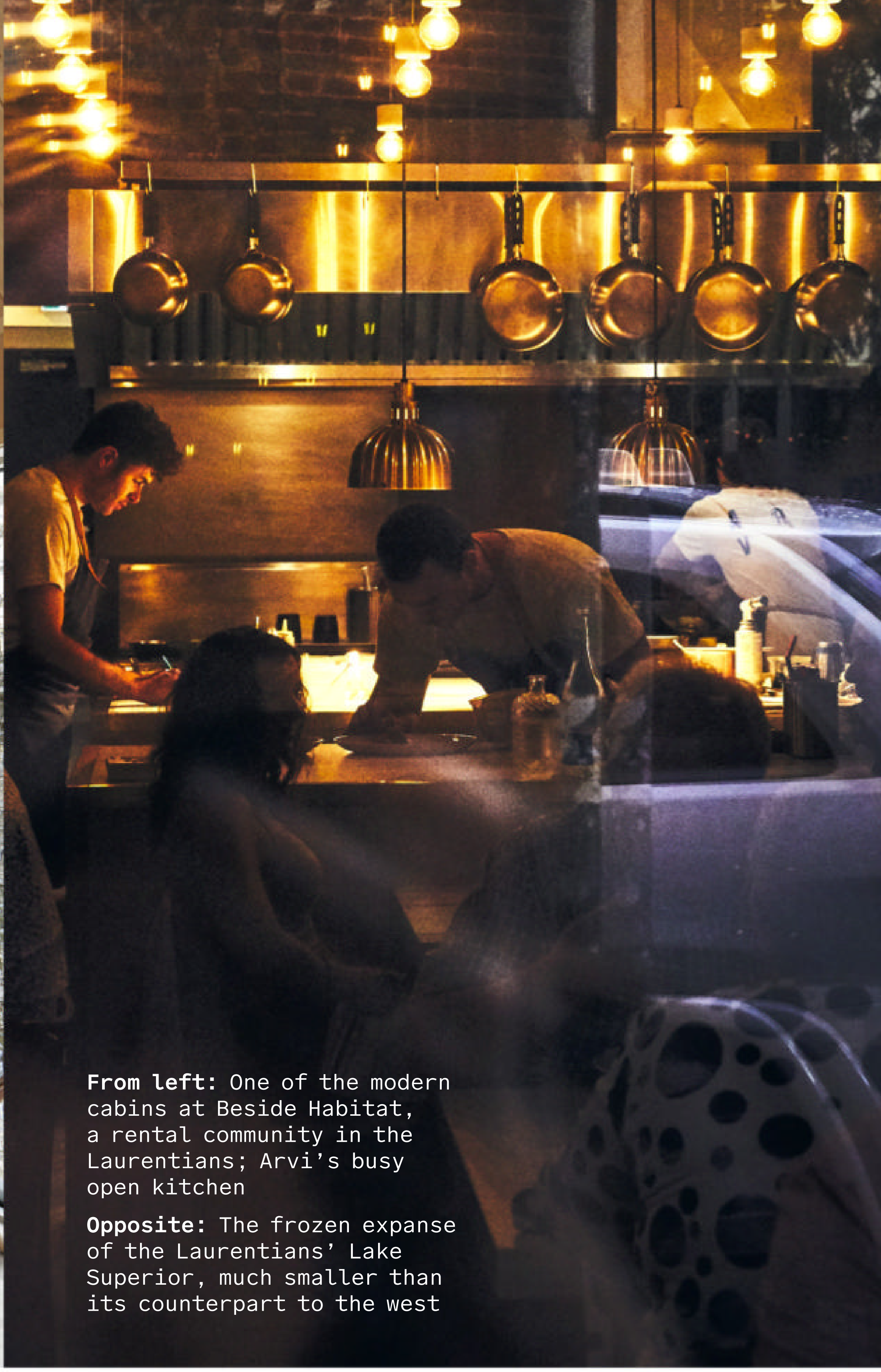
The saying is Quebec's motto, but until 1978, the license plates read "La Belle Province." Some trace the new phrase, which was adopted during a surge of support for the province's independence movement, to a poetic fragment: "I remember that, born under the lily, I grow under the rose." The lily is a symbol of France, the rose of England.

My own remembrances of Canada are dappled. I've lived in New York since 1998, but I was born in Toronto, and over the past dozen years, I've spent an increasing amount of time in Montreal with my family. In 2019 we bought an apartment there—partly because, with four kids and three pets, it had become difficult to find people willing to rent to that much chaos. Owing to a couple of Canadian citizenships, we were able to decamp to Montreal for much of the pandemic. It was during this period that we also adopted a kitten, Tamaki, from Quebec City. But spending so much time in Montreal these past few years made me realize how little I'd seen of the rest of the province.

Of course, there have been occasional bursts of exploration, mostly in the warmer months. We've ventured into the Laurentians, the mountain range just north of the city, speeding past fields of lavender and stopping along the roadside to pick and eat some of the perfectly tiny blueberries or the mercilessly sweet little strawberries. But winter is my favorite season. And it was time, I reasoned, to give our snow tires a proper challenge.

For the first few nights, our motley crew—my partner Joe and our daughter Georgie, along with our friend Anastasia, our dogs Pompom and Nettle, and Tamaki—stayed in a cabin at Beside Habitat, a community of 75 modern rental homes set in a forest in the Laurentians. To get there, we turned off a main road and drove into a wood with many birch trees. Outside our dwelling, we could see their thin silvery barks and branches, with a few pale-yellow papery leaves holding on through the winter. The curvy

PHOTOGRAPHS: CITIZEN NORTH, TQ/MAXIME BROUILLET, MAUDE CHAUVIN



From left: One of the modern cabins at Beside Habitat, a rental community in the Laurentians; Arvi's busy open kitchen

Opposite: The frozen expanse of the Laurentians' Lake Superior, much smaller than its counterpart to the west

byways had been cleared of snow, which even in March often reached as high as a few feet.

Late one afternoon, Georgie, Joe, and I set off to snowshoe toward one of the property's three ponds. In spring or summer, the walk would have probably taken 45 minutes; our clumsy traipse over the icy snow took about double that. Someone's foot would occasionally sink down, and our caravan would stop until it was extricated. Still, the walk sustained the wonderful illusion that the world was, for a moment, just us and the woods. When we arrived at the pond, it was smooth and white and frozen, with ripples blown across its snowy surface. We stepped out a bit, then a bit more, gaining confidence in the ice. Joe ventured to the middle, and Georgie started shouting with worry—but the ice, impermanent and irresistible, was plenty thick. The sunset appeared gray and lavender in the wintry haze. We headed back down the trail to our cabin, which glowed in the darkness.

"We think we're the first real estate project that started as a literary magazine," Jean-Daniel Petit, Beside's president and cofounder, told me later. Petit, a natural storyteller, explained that he himself was more of a country boy from Abitibi-Témiscamingue, a rural region in western Quebec. He moved to Montreal for school, studied graphic design, and worked a longish spell in advertising—which meant he became a city boy too. But after working on a 30-second TV spot filmed in Los Angeles, featuring DJ Lunice, the baseball player Matt Kemp, and a pet sloth in a Ferrari, he had a change of heart. "For a 26-year-old, it was exciting. But when I called my dad, he said, 'That's nice, I'm here playing with your niece,' and I thought, That's where I want to be too." Petit left advertising and went back home to found Abitibi&Co, a canoe and kayak outfitter, with his friend Guillaume Leblanc. Later, driven by a desire to marry nature with culture, they established Beside with their friend Elaine Cadieux. The trio purchased this stretch of woods and set about building an environmentally sound development. "I wanted something of both the city and the countryside," Petit said. "That was our vision."

The sleek Scandinavian-modern cabins are a good reflection of this. All wood and windows and light, they seem as though they could have sprung from the earth. Inside, locally crafted items combine high design with humble pragmatism: a leather-strapped canvas bag for gathering wood; ingenious wooden chairs that fold and unfold like toys; ceramic bowls and plates in earthy hues. The only things that didn't seem local were the small saunas in each cabin—that idea, Petit told me, came from Finland.

The next morning, Anastasia and I drove out to Grand Dérangement, a distillery in Saint-Jacques. Neither of us is great with directions, but we spotted the building easily: It looks like a boat whose prow is sinking under water—but here the water is dry land. Its window lines are parallel to the earth, the edges of its roof pitch forward.

Here we found a clue about what those license plates might be asking us to remember. In Canadian history, Le Grand Dérangement refers to the mid-18th-century expulsion by the British of the French-speaking Acadians during the French and Indian Wars; many had been living in the area for as long as a century. Close to half died, as ships sending them elsewhere capsized or became crowded with disease, and only a couple thousand Acadians are estimated to have remained in the area. A small museum inside the distillery explains the episode, with staged historical photos of some of the real Acadians from that time period, such as Pierre Melançon, nicknamed The Wizard for how he found aquifers, and Madeleine Doucet, an Acadian midwife who was deported and returned to New Acadia.

It's all largely a labor of love for the distillery's founder, Marcel Mailhot, whose nursery grows organic vegetables for the Arctic Gardens frozen line sold across the region. A lifelong resident of Saint-Jacques, Mailhot took over his parents' farm when he was 17; about 15 years ago, it became one of the first large farms in the province to adopt organic practices.

The head distiller, Louis-Vincent Gagnon, showed me around the enormous silver vats where organic grains were being processed; they would be used to make gin and vodka. "In Quebec, most distilleries don't produce the alcohol. Our grain comes from 2 to 10 kilometers away—and it's all done right here," he said, gesturing to the modest two-room compound. At a long table at the head of the room, a man was hand-dipping the gin bottles in bright yellow wax to seal them. "With vodka, unlike gin, it's not so much about the taste," Gagnon told me and Anastasia. "It's a way of showing respect for the land that the grain comes from—of remembering that this is our home."

Part of remembering, I would argue, is recognizing how many people and things have come to Quebec from elsewhere

A few days later, Joe had to return to Montreal for work, taking the dogs and cat with him. Anastasia also had to head home, back to New York City. Georgie and I went ahead for a day of sweetness and, for me, a kind of vicarious nostalgia. In Quebec, and also in other parts of Canada, the visit to a sugar shack (in French, a *cabane à sucre* or *érablière*) is practically a requirement for graduating from childhood. You go as a kid to see how maple syrup is harvested from trees, how it is transformed by a series of distillations into the familiar sweet substance; you eat an instant lollipop made from maple syrup poured onto a bank of snow and then twisted on a stick.

I somehow reached adulthood without ever visiting a cabane à sucre! (I also never saw *E.T.* or went to a summer camp with canoeing.) I wanted Georgie to be more excited than she was, but she doesn't like maple syrup or even, somehow, candy. "But it's the woods," I said, "and there might be wildlife."

When we arrived at Érablière le Chemin du Roy, there was the best kind of wildlife: a crowd of schoolchildren on a field trip. Many were lined up at a small hill, waiting their turn to ride down on inflated tubes that would deposit them into a forest of spindly maple trees.

The owner, Réal Boissonneault, told us that he'd bought the sugar shack 31 years ago from the legendary hockey player Guy LaFleur. "We wanted to keep it in the old-fashioned way," he said, explaining that this particular sugar shack had been around since 1925. He still used many of the same wooden barrels, which impart flavor to the syrup much like the barrels in which wines are aged. He also connects the practice of maple-syrup harvesting by the modern Quebecois to the techniques Indigenous people taught French and, later, British settlers:

PHOTOGRAPHS: KAM VACHON, MAUDE CHAUVIN

Clockwise from bottom right: Beside Habitat; the Gaspé Peninsula, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River; chaga mushrooms harvested from birch trees, at Arvi; Rivière-du-Nord, in the Laurentians; Arvi staffer Cédrick Michaud; an ice-fishing hut on the St. Lawrence cutting into the tree with a tomahawk and then using the removed wedge of wood to channel the syrup flow outward into a *mokuk,* or bark basket. Georgie politely declined the various maple-syrup treats but happily headed to the hill where the schoolkids were.

We reached Quebec City as the sun was setting. Slowly we walked toward our hotel, with the wind at our faces. The St. Lawrence River looked like it was streaming in ice from centuries ago. We've seen the river look slushy in Montreal, but here it was almost like a giant's sidewalk. All around, the past felt a bit taller and louder than the present.

Except, perhaps, at Arvi, an experimental restaurant where we were greeted by a young man who looked like a goalie. "I'll be your host now," he said, "but all of us work all roles here. So over the course of the evening, we'll rotate places as chef, dishwasher, sommelier—whatever is needed."

The waiters and sommeliers were also storytellers—each dish was a journey. The oyster mushrooms, harvested from just across the St. Lawrence River, were dressed with local camelina seeds, which taste a little like sesame. The leeks, from nearby Bellechasse, were paired with a chèvre from a town closer to Montreal and then served in a sauce made from sea buckthorn.

"Sea buckthorn?" Georgie asked. I looked it up on my phone: It's a cold-loving shrub with cantaloupe-colored berries. These days it's common throughout Quebec, but it is endemic to Siberia. That, Georgie pointed out, made it just like Tamaki; she is a hypoallergenic breed, brought over from Siberia.

Part of remembering, I would argue, is recognizing how many people and things have come to Quebec from elsewhere. I wondered if Georgie would remember this meal, where the waitstaff was nice enough to recognize that this eight-year-old would pass on the pâté, and on the chaga mushroom cola, and even on the sea buckthorn—but would happily eat four courses of cavatelli on a tiny plate.

The restaurant was full, and it seemed like everyone was there for a special celebration—a birthday, an anniversary, or some other marking of time. "I miss Tamaki," Georgie said, lamenting how long we'd been away from her (which was somehow always too long). We'd be heading home soon, but now we could also come back here, in the future, for a memory, if for a day we wanted a dollop of the past to have with our present.

Clockwise from bottom left: A spartan guest room at Le Monastère des Augustines, a former monastery; the majestic Fairmont Le Château Frontenac in Quebec City; making maple-syrup candies at a sugar shack, a Quebecois winter ritual

PHOTOGRAPHS: CITIZEN NORTH, LE MONASTÈRE DES AUGUSTINES, GETTY IMAGES

EXPLORING QUEBEC

MONTREAL

» Where to Stay

Old and new worlds commingle at **Hotel William Gray,** where an 18th-century graystone houses 127 stylish, contemporary rooms and a buzzy rooftop bar. *Doubles from $205; hotelwilliamgray.com*

Since its opening in 1912, afternoon tea has been a ritual of the **Ritz-Carlton Montreal,** and now guests can roll right into happy hour, with Dom Pérignon served (atypically) by the glass. *Doubles from $675; ritzcarlton.com*

» Where to Eat

At **Beba,** brothers Pablo and Ari Schor honor Argentine food's Spanish, Italian, and (for them, most personally) Jewish influences. *Dinner for two, about $220; restaurantbeba.ca*

» What to Do

Do as the Montrealers do and embrace the chilly temps: Join a guided snowshoe walk through **Mount Royal Park;** hit the free ice-skating rink in **Esplanade Tranquille** (there's a rental counter for skates); or cross-country ski in **Parc Jean Drapeau.**

LANAUDIÈRE & MAURICIE

» Where to Stay

With their cathedral-height windows, **Beside Habitat**'s 75 spare, sleek cabins—which come outfitted with wood-burning fireplaces and saunas—showcase the surrounding Lanaudière forest. *Doubles from $175; besidehabitat.com*

Strung across 1,000 acres in bucolic St.-Paulin, **Le Baluchon Éco-villégiature**'s four quaint lodges make a fine base for wintry activities like dogsledding and snow tubing. *Doubles from $249; baluchon.com*

» Where to Eat

Stop in for house-smoked brisket and a pull of foamy stout at **Le Temps d'une Pinte,** a hip microbrewery in the Mauricie hub of Trois-Rivières. *Lunch for two, about $80; letempsdunepinte.ca*

» What to Do

No cold-weather trip to Quebec is complete without a visit to a sugar shack—**Érablière le Chemin du Roy** is a sure bet. *erabliere-chemin duroy.qc.ca*

QUEBEC CITY

» Where to Stay

Housed in a former monastery where, in 1639, the continent's first hospital north of Mexico was established, **Le Monastère des Augustines** counts wellness experiences among its offerings; guests can sleep in a contemporary room or a monastic cell. *Doubles from $132; monastere.ca*

Looming over the St. Lawrence River like a royal fortress, **Fairmont Le Château Frontenac** epitomizes old-world splendor. *Doubles from $329; fairmont.com*

» Where to Eat

Staff rotate among roles at free-kitchen spot **Arvi,** but the inventive, elegantly plated food consistently impresses. *Dinner for two, about $176; restaurantarvi.ca*

At **Restaurant Le Clan,** former Château Frontenac chef Stéphane Modat spotlights Indigenous Quebecois ingredients, like walleye from Lake Saint-Pierre and partridge from Cap-Saint-Ignace. *Dinner for two, about $169; restaurantleclan.com*

BETSY BLUMENTHAL

slow it

On a leisurely train journey through central Vietnam, Michelle Jana Chan embraces the rhythms of the ride

Photographs by Ben Richards

down

A mile-long sweep of sandy beach fronts Zannier Hotels Bãi San Hô, near the city of Quy Nhon

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The grounds at the Bãi San Hô hotel; a savory bánh xèo pancake at Anantara Quy Nhon Villas; one of the pool villas at Bãi San Hô; tea and shadows at Bãi San Hô

I wander onto the station platform at Da Nang. The air is steamy despite the early hour. A pair of fighter jets incongruously painted vacation turquoise roar overhead, ripping up the sky with their sonic booms. A vendor calls to me in English, “Chips, cookies, snacks!” I shake my head and cross the tracks as extended families drag wheelie suitcases over the uneven ground. I walk toward the train and feel like a backpacker again, delightfully free.

This North-South railway line courses almost the entire skinny length of Vietnam. In recent decades, it has become an increasingly popular way for tourists to see the country. The line was completed in 1936, under French colonial rule; just 20 years later, when war broke out between North and South Vietnam, it became a key supply route for North Vietnam to receive support from China and the Soviet Union, its allies to the north. For the enemy, the tracks provided an easy target.

When Saigon fell in 1975 and the United States pulled out of Vietnam, the effort to restore this railway was a way of kick-starting the national economy and demonstrating the country’s engineering prowess. It was also, crucially, about healing. By the end of 1976, Vietnam had repaired hundreds of bridges, dozens of tunnels, and more than 150 stations. The train—connecting Hanoi in the north with Ho Chi Minh City in the south—was named the *Reunification Express*. This was victory.

Having worked as a correspondent in the region for years, I’ve boarded this train many times in both directions—sometimes with a berth, sometimes on a “hard seat” ticket, as the fare that gets you a spot on a wood banquette is called. I loved this journey back in the day when there was no icy air-conditioning, the windows slid open, there were bubbling hot samovars between carriages, and guards decked in finery saluted the trains as they pulled out of the stations.

ẢI ĐƯỜN… T SÀI G…
VIETAGE

This time around, I’m riding in *The Vietage.* The brainchild of the luxury hotel brand Anantara, it’s a stylish single carriage that’s linked to the end of the train for the 200-mile section between the cities of Da Nang and Quy Nhon. *The Vietage* connects two of the brand’s hotels, the Anantara Hoi An Resort (about 40 minutes south of Da Nang) and Anantara Quy Nhon Villas. It took the company four long years to sort out the necessary permits and realize the initial idea.

Before boarding the train, I spend two days in Hoi An, long one of my favorite retreats in Southeast Asia, getting in touch with old friends and making new ones. It’s a pretty, leafy riverside town filled with coffee shops and art galleries, which has attracted an outsize expat community. While there, I connect with the Japanese artist Saeko Ando, whom I met through a mutual acquaintance. She uses natural lacquer in her moody, nature-inspired paintings, borrowing an ancient Vietnamese technique. Ando invites me to have dinner with her and her friend Elka Ray, a Canadian novelist who lives by the beach, down a winding lane not wide enough for even a *tuk-tuk* to squeeze through. Both women have lived in Vietnam for more than 20 years, seduced by the go-slow tempo of life. “Vietnam is home,” Ray says, “but I won’t stay if it becomes too busy, too noisy, too much.”

The next morning, I wander into the gallery of the French fine-art photographer who goes by the single name Réhahn. He has spent the last decade taking

Clockwise from top left: An attendant welcomes guests onto *The Vietage* train car at the railway station in Dan Nang; Thap Doi Cham Towers, built in the late 12th century; inside *The Vietage;* breakfast prep at hotel Bãi San Hô; morning sun lights the Bãi San Hô's main pool

photographs of Vietnam's ethnic groups, of which there are more than 50, including the Dao, Nung, Hmong, and La Chi, across the country. Réhahn founded a museum in Hoi An that showcases this project. He's currently busy documenting traditional artisans, whose workmanship and skills he fears will be gone in a generation. The photographer introduces me to the 90-year-old lantern maker Huynh Van Ba, who tells me that he dreams each night of new designs. When I ask him about passing down his skills, he stares at me with milky eyes and says that his children aren't so interested. Réhahn also arranges for me to visit Bui Thi Xong, an octogenarian fisherwoman who takes me for a boat ride on the river, standing on the bow as she paddles upright with one oar. She jokes that while her hearing and eyesight are failing and she has no teeth left, she can still row a boat!

The next morning, I pack my bags and two staff members at the Anantara drive me to the train station in Da Nang, which sits just below the 17th Parallel and once marked the line between North and South Vietnam. From the exterior, the carriage of *The Vietage* looks like every other, with its red-white-and-blue-striped livery. But when I step inside through the heavy steel doors, I find a half dozen compartments with upholstered banquettes, sunlight filtering through the tiny hexagonal holes of rattan screens. Quang, the train manager, shows me my seat and suggests an iced coffee to go with my warm croissants and pain aux raisins. There's a lunch menu, speedy Wi-Fi, and soft blankets and neck pillows.

As we pull out of the station, a guard waves a flag furiously, and I watch as the vendors move their trolleys out of the way. From my cosseted vantage, we pass rusting train cars, chimney stacks, and the ubiquitous national flag, flapping red with a five-pointed yellow star. As the urban sprawl thins, the landscape morphs into chlorophyll green rice fields, the graphic vertical spears playing tricks on my eyes as we roll by. Farmers with their conical nón lá hats cut a quintessential Vietnamese silhouette, planting shoots by hand—backbreaking stuff. To my right are forested mountains, some sliced in half by mining activity; to my left is the sea.

We are traveling through the region of the Cham Empire. In its heyday, it was the chief rival of the Khmers. There are bas-reliefs at an Angkor temple in Cambodia depicting a 12th-century naval battle between the two sides. The Chams were formidable navigators and commanded a maritime trade network from Indonesia to Japan. Archaeologists have identified citadels and temple sites all along Vietnam's coast and throughout the mountains of Laos and Cambodia.

Over the next few hours, we cross rivers in which rice barges jostle with sampans. I watch fishermen flinging out their nets. There are man-made ponds with flotillas of ducks huddling in the shade of overhanging tree branches and lotus fields, tangled with lily pads, the luminous pink petals rising up from the mud. We also move through towns with concrete shophouses and pyres of household rubbish smoldering in backyards. At railroad crossings, I study the traffic we are holding back: overloaded motorbikes, gigantic trucks hauling shipping containers, double-decker coaches. The train's top

Inside one of the traditionally built wood villas at the Bãi San Hô hotel

Opposite page: A woman cycles toward the morning market in the riverside town of Hoi An speed is about 45 miles per hour. "Reunification, yes. Express, no," a local says, a twinkle in his eye.

At some point between breakfast and the three-course lunch, Tien, another attendant, asks if I'd like a shoulder massage in the treatment compartment. After the kinks in my neck are worked out, I head to the horseshoe-shaped bar and balance on a high stool while rural life rolls past: fields of feathery maize, some left fallow, others being plowed by buffalo. There are clusters of gravestones, an odd one plonked in the middle of a paddy.

Just after lunch, the train pulls into the port of Quy Nhon. This is as far as *The Vietage* goes. It's a short drive to Anantara's beachfront Quy Nhon Villas as well as to the Bãi San Hô, a hotel the French hospitality group Zannier opened about two years ago on a scalloped bay with a long sandy beach. Both hotel brands are betting on this emerging region, considered by many locals to be the most serene stretch of their country's coastline.

I split my time in Quy Nhon between the two hotels, and I tap the excellent concierges at both to get the lay of the land. Driving around with an Anantara-arranged guide one day, I visit impressive Cham ruins, including Duong Long, a little-known triptych of east-facing lotus-shaped towers; the central one is nearly 80 feet high. When we arrive, the gate is locked and nobody is around; my guide calls the guard who lives nearby to come to let us in. Once inside, I wander around the empty site, examining the red brickwork furred with moss and gazing up at the trees sprouting from the cracks of the towers. Later, I meet with traditional artisans, including fourth-generation hatmakers and a family who weave rattan fish traps. Another day, I take the houseboat at the Bãi San Hô hotel down the coast, anchoring to snorkel among coral reefs, before motoring into protected lagoons where fishermen live on pontoons and raise tiger prawns.

On my last morning, I visit a popular fortune teller. She tells me I'm her 10th client already. She sits cross-legged beside an altar packed with kitschy statuettes, two television sets, a Heineken festive candle, and an offering of Oreo cookies. I take my place opposite her on the plastic mat. She deals a deck of cards and interprets my selections before reading my palm: I should expect a long life, but I've had a bad year. ("It might get better," she quickly adds). She warns me not to make any weighty life-changing decisions. "Keep traveling," she says, as I turn to leave. "You'll always be safe traveling."

At dusk, lanterns are lit at Anantara Hoi An Resort

Opposite page: Central-coast specialties, including white rose dumplings, at Morning Glory in Hoi An; the view of the South China Sea from Anantara Quy Nhon Villas

all aboard

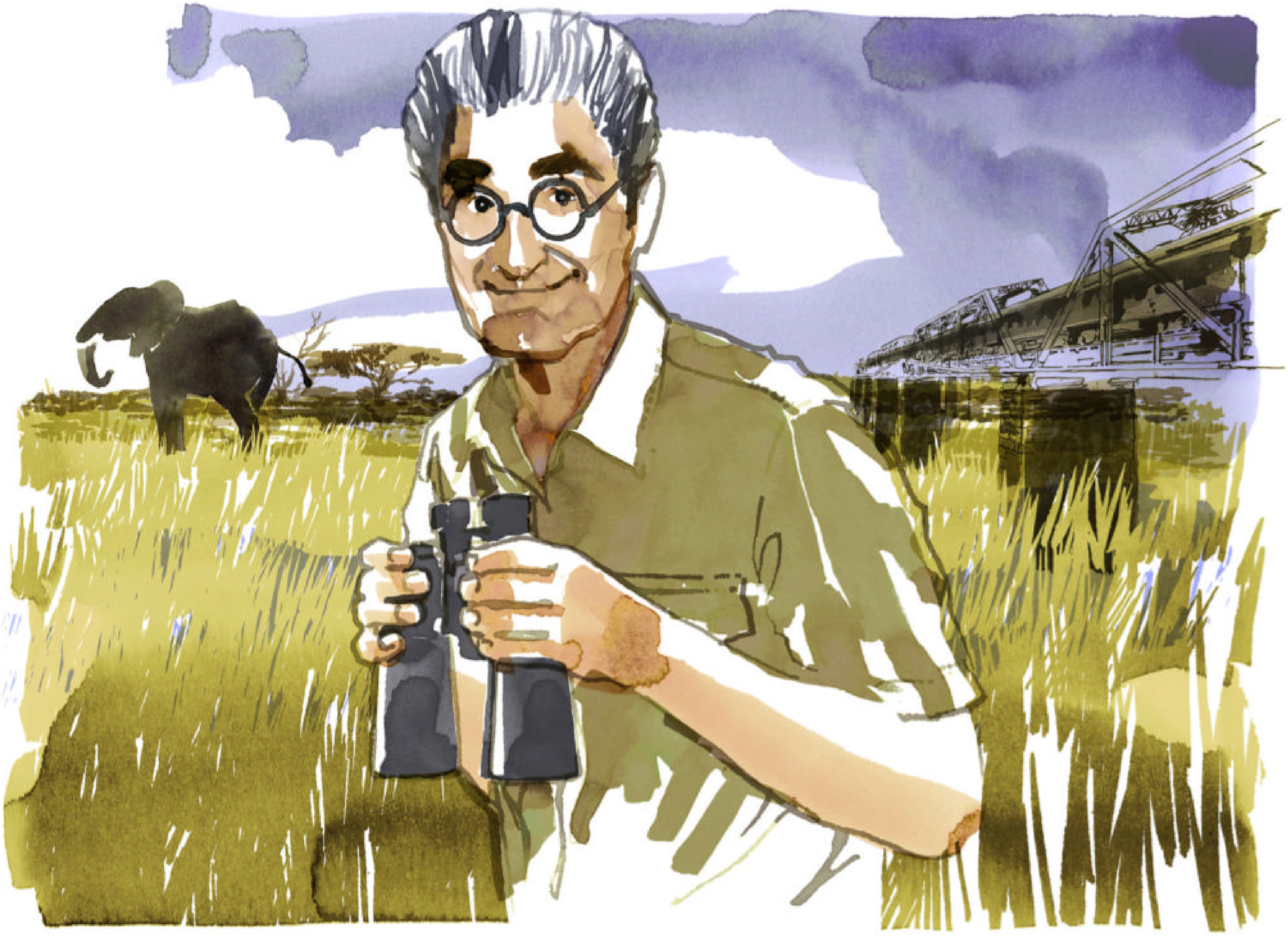
Anantara's *The Vietage* makes two trips daily. It departs from Da Nang Railway Station, about 20 miles north of the riverside town of Hoi An, every morning at 8 a.m. and arrives at Dieu Tri Station, right outside the port town Quy Nhon, around 2:30 p.m. In the evening, the train leaves Dieu Tri at 6:30 p.m. and pulls into Da Nang just after midnight. The car, beautifully kitted out with lots of rattan, light wood, and a sleek marble bar, has seating for a maximum of 12 passengers across six private rooms, each with two spacious seats. On the evening journey, the rooms can be converted into sleeper booths. The six-hour trip starts at $400 per person, one-way; this includes a three-course meal, drinks, and a head-and-shoulder massage. *The Vietage* is a lovely way to move between Anantara's Hoi An and Quy Nhon properties, but non–hotel guests can purchase tickets as well.

where to stay

Anantara Hoi An Resort
Overlooking the Thu Bon River, this 94-key hotel has lush landscaped grounds, a nice pool, daily morning yoga, and river cruises that depart from its private dock. The hotel's streetside café and art gallery are abuzz with locals, and it's a quick walk along the riverfront promenade to reach Hoi An's pretty town center, where the narrow alleyways are lined with shops, restaurants, and teahouses. *From $270; anantara.com*

Anantara Quy Nhon Villas
This beachfront retreat is a nice home base to explore the surrounding Cham-era temples. Ask the concierge to book you a guide who can show you around these historic sites, introduce you to artisans, and point you toward the best local seafood spots. Back at the hotel, visit the spa on the hill or take a martial-arts class on the lawn with the hotel's head of security. *From $700, including breakfast; anantara.com*

Zannier Hotels Bãi San Hô
With 73 villas cascading down a hillside to a sweeping arc of beach, this might just be the most beautiful property in Vietnam. The interiors are meticulous, and there is an excellent kitchen supporting three restaurants—one in a vaulted thatched space, another on the beach, and the third by the pool. There's good snorkeling in the neighboring bay and sundowner boat trips. *From $415; zannierhotels.com*



Actor EUGENE LEVY on SOUTH AFRICA

"When I was growing up, the one show I would watch with my dad was the docuseries *Wild Kingdom.* He got such a kick out of watching lions attacking antelope. And I got a kick out of watching him watching the show. Over the years, I think I saw every animal in the jungles and the plains of South Africa. So when Kruger National Park came up as a destination for the series I'm hosting and executive-producing, I honestly didn't see a reason for going. You know, I'd already seen it all. But my frame of mind went from 'I don't necessarily want to be here' to 'I don't want to leave' in just one week. It was kind of magical. Everything clicked the day that I saw the veterinarian hanging out the open doorway of a chopper with a dart gun, ready to tranquilize an elephant so he could perform medical tests. This is something they do twice a year, and they asked me to take part. Don't ask me why they wanted a person with a career in comedy to draw blood from an elephant—let alone take a stool sample. But feeling its pulse through a giant vein in its ear is an experience I won't soon forget. Later, in my room at Kruger Shalati, I sat gazing out the floor-to-ceiling windows at the marshy rivulets of the Sabie River below, watching an elephant and a hippo grazing in the distance. It was the most serene, comforting vignette, one that made me want to go down and spend an afternoon on a sandbar in a comfy little beach chair. If, of course, it weren't home to the Big Five. One morning, I saw the largest crocodile I've ever seen slithering through the shallow water under the bridge. But the more I saw, the more I felt connected to this corner of the world and to the animals. There was something about the beauty of the landscape and the danger within it—that combo that made me think, Okay, you know what, I get it now." AS TOLD TO SCOTT BAY

EUGENE LEVY IS HOST OF *THE RELUCTANT TRAVELER,* AIRING FEBRUARY 24 ON APPLE TV+.

ILLUSTRATION BY SARA SINGH

WHERE
Sustainability
IS SECOND NATURE

As the first eco-planned community in the U.S., environmental stewardship has always been at the heart of everything we do. From our award-winning network of bicycle pathways to our dedication to helping endangered sea turtles nest safely on our shores, come discover a world of natural wonder on America's Favorite Island®.

HiltonHeadIsland.org

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South Carolina

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Creating infinity
Yayoi Kusama
LOUIS VUITTON